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The Lives of **HARRY LIME**

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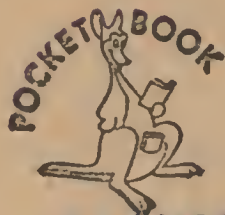
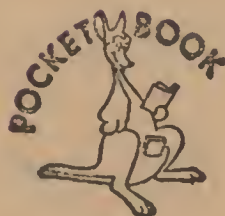
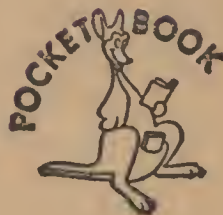
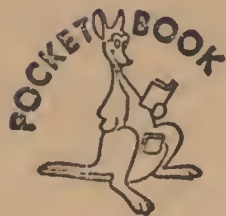
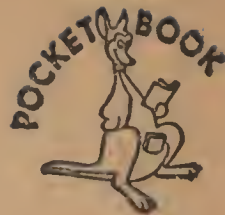
DIE
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by

**ORSON
WELLES**

and others





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The Lives ,
of
HARRY LIME

by
ORSON WELLES
and others



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Contents

IT'S IN THE BAG	<i>Orson Welles</i>	1
THE GOLDEN FLEECE	<i>Orson Welles</i>	10
ART IS LONG AND LIME IS FLEETING	<i>Sigmund Miller</i>	22
LOVE AFFAIR	<i>Sigmund Miller</i>	33
SEE NAPLES AND LIVE	<i>Sigmund Miller</i>	46
EVERY FRAME HAS A SILVER LINING	<i>Robert Cenedella</i>	58
PARIS IS NOT THE SAME	<i>Joseph Cochran</i>	69
FIVE THOUSAND PENGOS AND A KISS	<i>Carl Jampel</i>	82
THE HAND OF GLORY	<i>Jonquil Anthony</i>	97
THE HYACINTH PATROL	<i>Virginia Cooke</i>	109
HORSEPLAY	<i>Peter Lyon</i>	122
WORK OF ART	<i>Bud Lesser</i>	133
ROGUE'S HOLIDAY	<i>Peter Lyon</i>	145
A TICKET TO TANGIER	<i>Orson Welles</i>	157
AN OLD MOORISH CUSTOM	<i>Irvan Ashkinazy</i>	170

IT'S IN THE BAG

by

Orson Welles

It all happened on a train going through the Balkans from Istanbul to Belgrade. There's a mysterious veiled woman in it—naturally—and the whole thing ends up with me losing a suit-case full of money and getting a medal for doing it.

THE ORIENT EXPRESS—the Central Line that is—runs between Istanbul and Paris. I had left Istanbul because all I got there was a kick in the pants and a polite invitation to leave town. I wanted as much mileage between me and Turkey as possible so I had my ticket booked all the way.

It's one of those famous trains, you know, like the Flying Scotsman, the Chief, the 20th Century, the Blue Train and the Trans-Siberian. In the bad old days before the war the Orient Express—particularly as far as Athens—could be relied on to provide a better cross-section of weird animals than a travelling circus. But now, in the bad new days, the travelling companions you're likely to find yourself with are rarely more than faces to break the monotony of the landscape.

Take my own neighbour—a little Greek in a suit that looked as if it had been clipped out of a comic strip. His face, if you could call it a face, was just

something that grew a few inches north of his neck. The only feature to indicate which side was front was a pair of eyes that looked like black-currants swimming in lemon-juice. All together not the prettiest companion I could have chosen and a personality about as charming as a wad of yesterday's chewing-gum.

His name was Stathacopoulos and he travelled with as many provisions as a fair-sized delicatessen. This was lucky as it transpired that I'd missed the last sitting for dinner, and he insisted on my sharing his. But he had plenty of what he was pleased to call the 'wine of my country', which, although tasting a little like concentrated essence of candy store with a bit of cough medicine thrown in, had the kick of the proverbial army mule. I took very little and he took quite a lot, and pretty soon Greece's most relentless conversationalist was beginning to nod.

'Well, if you don't mind, old man,' I said, 'I think I'll just turn off the light and try to catch up on a little shut-eye.'

For some reason this alarmed him.

'No, no, the light must remain on; in the dark I might go off to sleep.'

'Do you a world of good, old man.'

'Tell me the truth, Monsieur. If you had ten thousand dollars in your pocket, would you go to sleep?'

'I've got more than that,' I said, 'a whole lot more. And it doesn't keep me from sleeping. And call me Harry.'

'How much more?' he asked.

'A hundred thousand.'

'A hundred thousand dollars, Harry?'

'That's right. Well, thanks for the picnic, old man, and be sure to wake me up when we get to Belgrade.'

I pretended to go to sleep and my grubby little friend, after picking his nails nervously with the broken blade of a penknife, settled down to watch me closely. I observed all this out of the corner of one slightly open eye and went on with a lot of fake snores for his benefit, praying all the time that the wine would finally be too much for him and he'd nod off. But there was no chance of that. No. He was going to stay awake if it killed him. *I* could have killed him out of sheer desperation.

Finally, he leaned over and shook me. What was I going to do with my money when we got to the border, he wanted to know. His money was the result of some black market wangling, and he didn't want the authorities to know about it. I spun him a yarn about my own activities—counterfeiting. My printer, I told him, was a Pole, my watermark specialist came from Roumania, and my engravings were done by a former chief technician of the German mint. Then I pulled out a wad of bills and let him examine them in detail.

Ten minutes later, with the assistance of another bottle of the local hooch, I allowed myself to be drawn into a business deal. Fifty thousand bucks' worth of nice, crisp Yugoslav banknotes to be sold to Mr. Stathacopoulos at twenty-five per cent of face value if my partner in Belgrade would agree to it. I arranged to get out at the next stop and phone Belgrade.

When the train pulled into the next whistle stop, I made like a bird for the station-master's office. From

where I sat by the window I could see my little Greek watching me from the train compartment. As the station-master got my call through, I gave Stathacoupos the old O.K. sign, and he produced a grin that looked as if his teeth hurt him.

'Border Police?' I said in a forced voice into the receiver. 'This is a tip. Don't ask who I am. There's a counterfeiter in compartment 25 of the Orient Express. I can't tell you his name. He's carrying a hundred thousand dollars' worth of forged banknotes.'

Back in the compartment, I told the Greek that the deal was on, but that we would have to hurry as I had to get off at the next stop to meet another client. We both brought out our money and were beginning to count it, when the compartment door was thrown open. In no time the compartment was full of cops, all shouting instructions at once. One finally ordered me in English: 'Hands up, and do not touch that counterfeit money.'

By this time the Greek was hysterical. 'It's not mine, I tell you, it's not mine. It's his, it's all his.'

'Is that true,' asked the English-speaking policeman. I admitted it.

'That's right, it's not mine,' cried the Greek. 'I am an honest business man. I don't deal in false currency. I am a Greek subject. I insist on my constitutional rights. . . .' He was still talking like that when they took both me and the money off the train.

When the jail door shut behind me I gave one minute's silence to the memory of a certain little Greek who must have discovered by then that he'd talked himself out of ten thousand bucks. And so to bed.

Came the dawn; came the sweet scent of cabbage soup and black bread; came the chief of police. He was full of apologies.

'My dear Mr. Lime, a thousand pardons! Belgrade have just informed us that your banknotes are in perfect order. How those silly train guards could ever have mistaken them for counterfeit is beyond me.'

'Me too.'

'I offer you, on behalf of the People's Democracy of Yugoslavia, my apologies.'

And so, after a ball with the chief of police and one or two of the local celebrities—female celebrities that is—I found myself back on the Orient Express with Mr. Stathacopoulos's ten thousand bucks to finance the trip.

Only this time there was a difference. In place of Mr. Stathacopoulos's family reminiscences and fried fish, we are now sharing a compartment with a fine-looking chick, pickled in *Bandit* by Piquet and stacked like a proud frigate. Like the classic lady of mystery, she was even wearing a veil—but not so much of it that you couldn't appreciate what lay behind. I was just figuring a way to get through the camouflage when she got the first word in ahead of me.

'I wonder if you could perhaps have the goodness to help me down with my bag? It is rather heavy.'

Of course, I was delighted. But she had been exaggerating, the way girls will: it wasn't heavy at all. In fact, it hardly weighed more than my own little bag that didn't contain anything except fifty thousand bucks and a toothbrush. And don't think that I took my eyes off my own little bag for one moment, even while helping my lady friend down with her outsize

bag. Harry may be gallant with the ladies, but Harry don't have much trouble keeping the hair outa his eyes.

After that we got quite pally, and I was just opening a bottle of something special that the local chief of police had given me as a farewell present, when a voice like Caucasian granite demanded from the doorway whether there was a vacant seat. I said 'No', but my girl friend said 'Yes', and our friendly little circle was now one too many.

Well, as long as Olga—we were already on Christian name terms, you see—and I were alone in the compartment I didn't mind this coy habit of the Orient Express of keeping its passengers in the dark while racing through a chain of tunnels. But now that we had company, I began to feel a bit bashful about it. And with good reason—for when we got out of the next tunnel my little bag had gone.

No, I didn't raise the alarm. I didn't pull the emergency cord, either. Not yet, anyway. I just looked at my two fellow-travellers and thought things over. What worried me was not so much who'd taken the bag but how they'd gotten rid of it. The window was closed, the door was shut, the baggage rack was in plain sight, and neither the girl nor the man could have hidden it on his person. Then what? Under the seat? I dropped a coin and started looking for it. What did I find? The coin, of course. No bag.

I was still turning it over in my mind when Olga broke the silence. "The tunnel, it has made the air rather bad, has it not? Perhaps you could open the window a bit, Monsieur?"

'Perhaps. As a rule these damn windows stick. It

takes about three strong men and one derrick to raise them.'

'Perhaps the other gentleman could help.'

'I regret, but I am blind.'

That seemed to rule out the man. So while I went through the motions of trying to open the window, I watched the reflection of my girl friend in the glass. As I was saying, you have to be patient in my line of business, even if it makes you look like a fool spending half an hour trying to get a train window open—but in the end I was rewarded. Yes, it was in the big bag, of course: my little bag was in the big one. . . . Very cute.

Just then we went into another tunnel. I figured that all I had to do now when we got out of it was to grab the big bag and get my money back. If the girl didn't carry a rod, that shouldn't be too tough. Anyway, that's what I thought. But when we did come out into daylight again, it turned out that Old Harry had been outsmarted for the second time. Now the big bag had disappeared. How? I'll give you one guess—through the window that I had so obligingly opened for Olga. So what now? Well, the old emergency cord, of course.

Almost before the train had stopped I was out of it and well into the tunnel. But somebody was behind me. And as I was running and stumbling through the tunnel a nasty thought occurred to me: maybe it was the blind man after all who had tossed out the bag. If so, he'd have all the advantage over me in the dark. And at that moment I stumbled over something and fell.

But what I had fallen over wasn't the bag, and

what my fingers touched wasn't money, but a face—a man's face. It couldn't see who it was, but I didn't need to, for suddenly I had it all figured out. The Greek must have sent the dame with the trick bag after me to get back his dough. She had an accomplice placed in the tunnel to pick up the bag. The whole thing was timed perfectly—a bit *too* perfectly, because when Olga tossed out the bag it hit her accomplice on the noddle and knocked him cold.

Just then, a voice called just behind me: 'Mr. Lime! Hullo, Mr. Lime!'

So help me! it was my old chum the chief of police. Pretty soon I was surrounded by policemen all patting me on the back and shouting 'Bravo'. When we got out of the tunnel the police chief made a little speech.

'Mr. Lime, on behalf of the Yugoslav People's Democracy, I extend my most profound appreciation and gratitude for this astounding exhibition of quick action and bravery. Why, it must have taken enormous strength to knock out a man as powerful and dangerous as Leonov!'

'Leonov,' I said. 'You mean you know him?'

'*Know* him! Why, Mr. Lime, he is our public enemy Number One. *Everybody* knows him.'

I decided to take the plunge. 'Just one thing. I wonder if any of your men have happened to stumble over a suit-case . . .?'

'Indeed we have. A large suit-case with a fortune of money inside.'

'Thank heaven for that.'

'It was the property of his sister—a dangerous woman, sir. It is indeed fortunate that we have been

able to intercept that money. It was intended, naturally, for the financing of more sabotage. . . .'

'Now just a minute,' I interrupted, 'let me tell you about that money.'

'No need at all, sir. We understand everything, and the money has, of course, been confiscated by the proper authorities. And as a reward for your glorious effort, you will receive . . .'

'Yes. What will I receive?'

'The highest decoration that the People's Democracy of Yugoslavia can bestow.'

'A medal! Who wants a medal? I tell you the money is mine.'

'I beg your pardon.'

This obviously wasn't going down too good, but I tried to explain what had happened. The police chief cut me short with: 'Sir, that's a very mercenary attitude, if you'll forgive me for saying so . . .'

'I don't care,' I hollered. 'I want my money.'

'You would be very mistaken to try and set yourself against the will of the People's Government. Others have tried it, and well . . . take a piece of friendly advice, sir.'

'Well, what's the pitch?'

'Settle for the medal.'

And that is how I got me a nice big medal. Yeah, Harry Lime was a real live hero, which cost him a lot of dough.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

by

Orson Welles

I've not told you the story about how I went half-way around the world and almost got my head blown off for my trouble. And, by the way, have you ever known a girl with yellow eyes? It's a queer story, no matter how you look at it. It begins with a bull-fight and ends with a naval engagement on the China Sea. There's a woman in it, of course . . .

IT ALL STARTED in the little seaport of Algeciras, and, like every other town in Spain; there's a bull-ring there. I don't know how you feel about bull-fights, but if it's Sunday in Spain, it's a little hard to stay away from them. A bull-fight is to Spain what an opera is to Italy—it's the only thing in the country that starts on time. I'd been dawdling over my shell-fish and beer, so I only got in for the second faena.

Soldadito was in the ring. He was younger then, and braver than he is now, but I've never been one of his fans. Too much ballet dancing for me and not enough bull-fighting. But we won't go into that: I could talk about the corrida all night, but I promised you a story about adventure on the high seas. . . . Well, it's beginning right now.

Soldadito is dedicating the bull. He is paying this compliment to the lady seated next to me. For the

first time I glance at her—and the glance freezes into a stare. She has very dark red hair, very pale ivory skin, and very bright yellow eyes. I mean yellow—like a cat's. I won't dwell on her—I'd like to, but I won't. It's enough to say that this kid could stop traffic on the Indianapolis speedway.

The bull-fighter turns, tosses his hat to her in the classical gesture over the shoulder, and moves into the sunlight towards the bull. But as far as I am concerned, the bull-fight is over.

'You must watch the ring, Señor.' Her voice was low, her eyes were mocking.

'I beg your pardon?'

'It is very pleasant to feel your eyes upon me,' she went on, with just a trace of an indefinable foreign accent. 'I adore being stared at, but just now don't you think it's a bit disrespectful to our friend Soldadito?'

'He is no friend of mine. And if he's a good friend of yours, Señorita, permit me to inform you that he is my enemy.' I bowed slightly from the waist, but my eyes never left hers.

She smiled. 'He is very graceful, don't you think?' There was silence for a moment as she waited for my answer. Then she went on: 'Yours was also a graceful speech, Señor.'

We were silent until the bull-fighter had made his kill, and then, while the crowd went wild applauding, she turned towards me again.

'That was a beautiful kill, wasn't it, Mr. . . . What is your name?'

'Lime. Harry Lime,' I replied. And then, grudgingly, I added, 'Yes. It was a good kill.'

'I will call you Harry. The bull kneeled like a penitent at his feet. The beast seemed to be asking the Torero's pardon.' Her voice was light and mocking.

'It should have been the other way round,' I replied.

She laughed. 'Ah, you are already jealous. I adore that. Tell me, Harry, what are you doing in Alge-ciras?'

'Oh, just looking around.'

'And what are you looking for?'

It was my turn to smile. 'No need to look any longer,' I replied, 'I've found it.'

'You make very pretty little speeches. I adore that. What is your profession?'

I wasn't too sure, at that time, exactly what it was myself, so I replied that it was mostly concerned with the export trade. She looked disappointed and I asked her why.

'I had allowed myself to hope that you were a sailor,' she replied.

That presented no difficulty. 'Well, I have been a sailor. Will that help?'

She hesitated, 'You'd have to have Master's papers. I am here with my yacht. Perhaps you have seen it in the harbour.'

I said I had seen a big three-master with a black hull.

'It's mine. We have lost our captain. I am very sorry you aren't a ship's captain. I would like to see you in the blue jacket with the gold buttons.'

The prospect also appealed to me, so I answered 'Would you believe it, I *was* a ship's captain.'

'I do not believe it. No.' Her tone was definite.

'But I have Master's papers.'

She thought for a moment. Then she asked where they were.

'In Barcelona.'

'That is a bore because we are leaving to-morrow.'

I jumped at the opportunity. 'I'll have someone bring 'em down by train to-night.'

She smiled. 'In other words you want the job.'

'In other words I've *got* the job.'

Her silence was assent enough for me. I suggested that she might give me *her* name. As she rose to go her yellow eyes were smiling. 'I am the Baroness von Koenigswald. But my first orders are that *you* will call me Nadya.' And then she was gone.

I needed that job too much, and of course she knew it. I don't say she didn't like me, but there wasn't any doubt of it that season that I was a little frayed about the seams. So I phoned a friend of mine, a forger up in Barcelona, who made arrangements to cook up some papers for me and rush them down to the coast.

The next morning I had the forged papers safely in my pocket. The truth was, of course, that I had never been a sailor in my life unless you count the work I had to do as a deck-hand when they found me stowed away on a short trip from Alexandria to Naples. But I needed that job bad. And after one look into those huge yellow cat's eyes of hers, I would have jumped at any job she offered, whether I needed it or not.

She was waiting for me at the top of the gangplank, immaculate in white slacks and a sweater which revealed more than it concealed. She asked me how I liked the ship.

'It's a beauty,' I replied.

'The steward will take your luggage down to your cabin,' she told me. 'Right now you'll be needed on deck to superintend our departure.'

I felt as though our little Mediterranean cruise was going to suit me fine. I asked her where we were going.

Her reply was soft, caressing and . . . a bombshell. 'To China.'

Algeciras, Spain, to Hong Kong, China—that's quite a run for an old salt whose only experience as a navigator had consisted of piloting a canoe around the shallow end of Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin! Luckily I had thought to bring along a little help; his name was Sidney Carton—an ex-smuggler, or rather an unemployed smuggler. I'd run into Sidney on various little capers in and around the Mediterranean and I figured that he was crooked enough so I could trust him. His main attraction besides a shock of dirty carrot-coloured hair and a glass eye, was a set of teeth like a rotten rake.

But if Sidney was an eyesore, he was a gift from heaven as far as Captain Lime was concerned. He was a real sailor, remember, and covered up for me, doing all the real work while I walked around in my blue jacket with the gold buttons on. But naturally he wasn't doing this for love, so I had found it necessary to make him a few promises. I had told him that we were one of the ships of a big smuggling organisation, and that he was to get part of the rake-off.

As it turned out the con I was handling out to poor Sidney to persuade him not to jump ship was getting to look less like con every day, and more like the facts.

Something about this trip was fishier than all the fish in the sea. I didn't know what, but I was keeping my eyes open.

Why had I been signed on with a few questions asked? Why had we left so quickly? Above all, what had happened to the original captain? Oh, it was queer enough all right. But in spite of all these unresolved questions, the trip was becoming a real pleasure cruise. For while Sidney looked after the handling of the ship, I looked after Nadya—to both her and my own evident satisfaction.

Then one night I was up on deck finishing a cigarette. Suddenly a voice spoke to me out of the shadows. 'Arry, 'Arry.' It was Sidney. I moved over to him: he was trembling with excitement. 'I've found the contraband,' he said. 'Under the floorboards. Amazing it is, amazing. But perhaps I ought to begin with the explosives.'

'Explosives!' I interjected.

'Very powerful they are. Enough to blow this ship to China.' His voice was frightened.

That was a nice thought.

'But that's not the contraband,' he went on, then he took my arm. 'Did you ever notice that glass box in the chart-house with a sign over it that says "Emergency Only".'

Something moved on deck. I motioned him for silence. After some moments I nodded and he went on in a whisper: 'And I found out about the captain, 'Arry, do you know who 'e was? He was a naval officer for 'Itler—an 'igh an' mighty mucky muck in the Nazi Navy . . . an' 'is name?'

'What's his name to do with it?' I interrupted.

'I'm comin' to that. . . . It was Von Koenigswald!' I was silent.

'Yes it's her 'usband,' he went on. 'And what with the contraband an' the explosives . . . those explosives are all wired up an' set to go. This ain't a ship, it's a bomb!'

'And the contraband?' I asked. He didn't have time to reply, for there was a sudden movement farther along the deck.

I whispered: 'I'll be back in a second,' and moved out of the shadows. Nadya was by the rail.

'It's too hot to sleep . . . isn't it?' There was invitation in her tone.

'It's pretty hot all right.'

'Keep me company, Harry . . . I'm lonely.'

When I finally got down to my own cabin, it was dawn. I didn't dare go looking for Sidney, and anyway I was bone tired. I couldn't have slept for more than an hour, when a knocking at the door awoke me. It was Mathews, the third officer. His news was that Sidney was gone. Just that—gone—in mid-ocean.

The news was serious, but I managed to make a deal with young Mathews. I showed him some papers I happened to have proving that I was a secret operative from the F.B.I., and explained that he would have to cover up for me the way Carton had been doing before, and pretty soon everything was under control again.

It was late in March when we sighted Hong Kong. I'd learned how to imitate a sea captain by then but I was more than a little anxious about my papers. There'd been a nasty moment or two in Tahiti for

one thing, and I still didn't know anything about the purpose of the trip. Sidney hadn't got around to telling me what the contraband was before he disappeared. But before we got to the harbour a speed-boat came up to us. For a nasty moment I thought it might be the police, but Nadya said that it belonged to her. She told me that the two of us had a dinner engagement.

We'd been riding up the river in the motor-boat for a good half-hour before she took it into her beautiful head to explain. We were going to meet a General Wei, former Governor of one of the largest southern provinces.

'The General is planning to retrieve the lost provinces,' she said. 'Luckily he is a wealthy man and had many investments in Tangier. It was my mission to bring him some of his wealth which will be needed in the coming war. I think you have guessed what happened to Baron von Koenigswald . . .?'

'I think so. I think the Baron had a wife and I think his wife bumped him off.'

She nodded her affirmative. 'He was a greedy man. I had reason to suspect that he planned to take part of the gold for himself.'

Gold. So that was what Sidney had found.

'Yes,' she went on. 'That's why I couldn't tell you earlier. It would have been too much of a temptation. The ship is lined with gold: half a million dollar's worth.'

You know those Chinese ships that look like some kind of cross between a Spanish galleon and a floating chop suey store? Well, pretty soon we came up to the biggest and gaudiest on the river. We were helped

aboard with a whole lot of Oriental fanfare, and I gathered that in a minute we were going to be presented to his nibs, the war-lord, himself. Then a dignified old gentleman emerged from the crowd, and Nadya ran over and embraced him. After a moment she turned to me and said: 'This is General Wei—Mr. Harry Lime. Harry may I present my father?'

He laughed at my surprise. 'Her mother was a White Russian refugee,' he explained. 'I met her in Cheefoo and made the mistake of marrying her. Nadya, however, is no mistake. She is my very precious jewel, Mr. Lime, and I thank you for taking such good care of her.'

With that we moved into lunch. Lunch! I know you've heard about shark's fins and bird's nest soup, but I bet you never knew that a Chinese banquet can last seven and a half hours. Well, this one did—with eating all the way. We hadn't finished even then, when a sailor dashed in, made obeisance to the General, and muttered something in Chinese. Everyone got up in consternation.

'What's the matter?' I asked Nadya.

She was distraught. 'The boat, Harry—our boat with all the gold on it—it has vanished!'

While we were stuffing ourselves someone had made off with the yacht. Word came to us that it was going downstream towards the open sea. We dashed across the saloon, over the decks and into a launch that was moored at the side. The General gave rapid orders in Chinese.

We had a dangerous-looking gang of hatchet men with machine-guns on our launch, and it could make good speed. It wasn't long before we neared the

yacht, and I could read the name *Golden Fleece* on its stern. The General hailed them, but the only reply we got was a shot across our bows. The hatchet men replied with their machine-guns, and I could see that a lot of damage was done to the crew on board the yacht. I could see that they weren't my crew, but were strangers—Chinese.

Our deck was about parallel with their superstructure and as soon as we were alongside, the General jumped, with me after him and Nadya a close third. As soon as we hit the deck a shot rang out and the general fell to his knees. Nadya and I were at his side in an instant. We managed to get him in the shelter of the chart-house. Then a mean-looking Mongol I hadn't noticed before, high up in the shrouds bit off the end of a grenade and threw it smack into our launch.

'Well, there goes everybody on our side,' I said. 'I guess this is it, Nadya.'

A figure appeared on the bridge. 'Yes, Nadya, this is it,' he said.

Nadya gasped. Her father cried: 'You, Von Koenigswald.'

He smiled. 'Don't worry, Nadya. I am not a ghost. Happily for me I was not as dead as you thought I was when you pushed me into the sea. And you should have remembered I am a good swimmer . . . Keep your hands in the air, please, all three of you.'

We were in a spot. 'What are you going to do with us?' I asked.

'I am going to do unto others as they would do unto me. If you happen to remember any prayers, you'd better start saying them. All three of you.'

The General was losing a lot of blood. 'I am wounded, Koenigswald, and dying. It doesn't matter about me, but Nadya . . .' his voice trailed away.

'Father, I am your true child. Do you think I would leave you now?' She bent over him and loosened his collar.

This was all very well, but I am not the heroic type. 'What about me?' I asked.

Nadya turned towards the bridge. 'Hans, this man has done nothing to harm you, let him swim for it.'

'He knows about the gold, Nadya, and I prefer to keep that as my own secret.'

'He also knows about something else, don't you, Harry?' Nadya was speaking quickly. 'Carton told you about it the night I killed him. A tiny glass window here by my hand. He explained it to you. I heard him. The sign says: "Emergency Only". Remember what he said, Harry: "This isn't a ship. It's a bomb."'

Von Koenigswald moved forward with an oath, but Nadya motioned him back. 'Go, Harry,' she whispered. 'Over the side.'

When I surfaced I heard her voice again. 'Good-bye, Harry,' it called. Immediately after it there was a piercing explosion and brilliant orange flash.

A sampan picked me up, but I almost drowned myself first thinking about all that gold—half a million dollars' worth of it—going down to the bottom of the sea.

I told this story, just as I've told it to you, to a man I bumped into a couple of days after I was put ashore. 'I know the spot where it happened,' I said, 'I've got

it marked exactly on the map. It'll cost about £20,000 to do the salvage but that still leaves a pretty big margin of profit. I just wondered whether you'd be interested, sir, in investing?'

He finished his drink. 'I wonder if you know who I am?'

I shook my head.

'I happen to be the Lord Constable and Chief of Police in this colony. We have a full dossier on your activities as a confidence man, and I thought I'd let you tell your tale because I wanted to know how you work. Lime, that salvage racket is the oldest of all the skin games—I'm surprised at your trying it on anybody, least of all on a policeman. Good night now, and, by the way, we'd be much happier here if you'd leave town. Within the next twenty-four hours that is.'

I think you'll understand why I don't like telling this story. Whoever I tell it to usually turns out to be a cop, but that isn't the worst of it.

The worst of it is that it is all true.

ART IS LONG AND LIME IS FLEETING

by

Sigmund Miller

I think that it is about time I told you about the most bitter success I ever had. The 'business deal' which I conducted with such skill and artistry worked out superbly according to plan—unfortunately! It was the worst good luck that ever befell me. Lady Fortune smiled at me as she knocked me over the head.

I SHALL NOT burden you about how I met two lovely Brazilian women, Inez and Aurora. They were very rich and were in Paris on a buying spree. The three of us became inseparable friends in short order. I told them that I was a dealer in masterpieces of famous painters. They were most eager to see my collection. Consequently I began to browse around old antique shops looking for something to sell them.

I was in about the tenth shop on my list when I noticed something that might suit my purposes. It was a picture of a nude bather, and in a dark light from a distance, it might look a little like a Renoir. I looked the picture over carefully to see if it had a signature on it, but luckily there was no inscription.

'Looks a little like a Renoir,' I said tentatively.

The dealer looked doubtful: 'Well . . . perhaps . . .'

I asked him how much it was.

'Ten thousand francs.'

'That's plain robbery!'

He laughed. 'It's a fine painting, and as you say it looks a little bit like a Renoir.'

When I offered to give him an extra thousand francs if he put the picture in a heavy gold frame that I had noticed hanging on the wall, he was appalled. 'Oh, no, Monsieur,' he exclaimed, 'That frame is worth more than the picture.'

'All right—twelve thousand francs. No more bargaining. Is it a deal?'

Five minutes later I was walking out of the shop with the picture underneath my arm.

I took a suite at the elegant George Cinque Hotel, and hung the picture on the wall with a tiny spotlight over it. Underneath I had a plaque which read simply: 'Renoir'. Then I invited Inez and Aurora to have cocktails with me in my suite.

We took a long time over cocktails. I had prepared the ground well, and they were on tenterhooks to go into the next room and see the painting. But it is a part of my technique to allow my clients to become more anxious than me to clinch a deal. Moreover, I was enjoying myself. The two girls were undeniably lovely.

Eventually, however, I allowed myself to be persuaded, and took them in to see it. The room was in darkness, and I turned on the single light over the picture. Then I turned to them:

'Magnificent, isn't it?' I asked.

'It is beautiful,' said Inez.

'I've looked at this picture a thousand times—many

times a day for the last few years. I just cannot part with it. Look at the form of the bather—so chaste, so full of feeling: see how the Master subjugates detail into divine form.'

Aurora said: 'It's a Master's piece.' She often made mistakes of that sort when she was excited. We all laughed at her mistake. Then Inez said:

'How much do you want for this painting, Harry?'

'I don't think I want to sell it,' I replied.

There were exclamations of dismay. 'You and your mind changing: that is not nice,' cried Aurora.

'It's true I want the money, but—well you understand—it is the one beautiful thing in my life.'

They reminded me that I was a dealer and must not go back on my word. I said that I must think about it, that there was no hurry.

'But we must have it,' Aurora insisted.

I offered to take them out to lunch on the next day; we would decide then.

'If you do decide to sell, how much will you want for it?' asked the practical Inez.

'I would never sell it under four million francs.'

'Four million!' they exclaimed together.

I was triumphant. 'Too much money for you,' I said, 'and too hard for me to part with it. So we will remain just friends. . . .'

'I do not care how much money, I must buy it,' interrupted Aurora.

'We will meet to-morrow at the usual place for lunch, and talk it over. In the meantime you think about it, and I'll think about it.'

'All right, Harry. At one-thirty to-morrow.' Inez said as I shepherded them out of the room.

They left a few minutes later. It was working out fine. They were on the hook, and all I had to do was carefully reel them in.

Then came a knock on the door.

It was a grim, morose character, called Paul Bazin. I was not glad to see him, and that is putting it mildly. He asked me if I remembered him, and his tone showed that the interview was not going to be a pleasant one.

'I never forget old friends,' I answered as warmly as I could. 'We used to be partners.'

My opening gambit could not have been worse. 'A partner, eh?' he snarled. 'While they hustled me into jail, you hustled off to the Riviera with all the money.'

I remarked that accidents often happened.

'You're going to have an accident, too, Harry.' A gun in his hand showed on what lines his thoughts were running.

'They guillotine people here for committing murder,' I said.

'If they catch them.'

I tried to make a deal. It was the only way. 'If you put that gun down, I'll tell you about a little deal that's coming off to-morrow. I'll cut you in on it.' There was a long pause, after which I added: 'Your share will be two million francs.'

He gave a gasp, so I went on quickly: 'Did you see those two women coming out of my suite?'

'I saw them.'

'They think that this is a Renoir hanging on the wall. They're going to give me four million francs.'

He asked me why I was going to give him two million. He was sure it was not mere generosity.

I went on: 'They're rich Brazilian ladies. Tomorrow at lunch we're going to clinch the deal. I want you to be a friend of mine—an art dealer.'

'I don't know anything about paintings.'

'Neither do they. Is it a deal?'

He thought for a few moments, and then said that he would phone the women to confirm my story.

'They're not at their hotel yet,' I objected.

'I'll wait.'

I offered him a drink but he refused. I filled my own glass, and we both settled back into our armchairs.

We waited an hour until Inez and Aurora returned to their hotel. Paul was satisfied that I had told him the truth and he finally left me . . . until lunch the next day.

I began to think of a plan to rid myself of this surly and unpleasant fellow. I can't stand people who hold grudges for years. It's a sign of immaturity.

The next day we met at lunch as scheduled. At first it was difficult to steer Bazin successfully through a discussion on Impressionist painting, but he soon lapsed into a moody silence, and they accepted him as an eccentric. Then they broached the subject of the Renoir. For quite a time I stalled them, but Inez eventually asked outright:

'You don't want to sell it?'

I was very embarrassed. 'I do . . . that is, I must,' I replied. 'But you see, after I left you, I had an offer from the Fontaine Galleries for five million. I am very embarrassed by it. I don't like this kind of business.'

They objected that I had accepted their offer of four million the previous day.

'I did not make a promise. I said I might sell it for four. You must understand: I am a business man. I must sell to the highest bidder. Why don't you forget the Renoir. I'll be glad to show you other paintings—very fine ones by other artists for much less money.'

Their two heads met over the coffee-cups. There was a whispered conference, and Inez finally looked up. 'We will buy it for five. I will write a cheque for you right now.'

I tried not to look triumphant. Explaining that I had some very urgent bills to pay, I asked if I could have the sum in cash. 'It will take a week to clear your cheque through the bank. I can only wait until this evening. You get the cheque cashed at your bank, and we can meet for dinner. We'll have a real big dinner in celebration.'

'You come too, Monsieur Bazin,' said Aurora.

I was not surprised when he accepted.

'I'll bring the painting with me,' I said.

Inez asked where we should meet.

'My favourite restaurant is La Rue in the Madeleine,' I replied. And they agreed to meet us there.

I was quite pleased with the way things were going. My only regret would be the necessity of a forced departure from Paris, and from Aurora, of whom I was beginning to grow fond. She was my type, beautiful and not too encumbered with brains, but she had lots of spirit and exuberance.

But, as they say in France: 'Les affaires sont les affaires.'

However, I had one real problem: to get rid of Bazin. He was sticking to me like a tree to the earth. Eventually I persuaded him to go back to his room and pack. We should meet in my suite at five o'clock. He agreed with bad grace.

'All right. But if you try any tricks, Harry, I swear I'll hunt you down and kill you. I mean it.'

'I know you are a sincere fellow,' I replied. 'Meet me at five—I'm going to grab this cab.' So I left him on the pavement, hoping that our paths would not cross again.

I had to work fast now that I was rid of Bazin. I hurried to my hotel and began to pack my clothes. Then I telephoned my two Brazilian customers, and regretfully informed them that I had just learned that La Rue's was closed that night and that we had better meet at an Italian restaurant called 'Casa Bellini'.

I finished packing quietly, wrapped up the painting and made ready to leave. The sooner I left my suite the better: I had a feeling that Bazin would change his mind and come early.

I crossed the room with my suit-case, and my hand was just reaching out towards the door knob, when the door began to open. Paul Bazin stepped into the room.

I explained that I was just going downstairs to pay my bill. He had a nasty suspicious mind and thought that I was going to run away and that he had just caught me in time. I tried in vain to persuade him that my motives had been innocent. Eventually I got exasperated and said:

'Look here, Paul, we have three hours until we go

to La Rue's. You are not going to stand there with the gun in your pocket all afternoon?'

'That is exactly what I am going to do,' he replied, sitting down in a chair.

I offered him a drink; he refused. I offered to play cards with him, to play dice with him or to order him a sandwich: he refused.

Finally I asked: 'You just want to sit?'

'That's right.'

He would not let himself become off guard. He sat in the chair and kept a beady eye on me. I don't mind people staring at me, but Bazin had a gun and when he discovered my defection, he would become peeved and kill me.

He sat there a long time, and then even he became bored with just sitting. He tilted his chair against the wall, rocking himself to and fro, with the pressure of his toes against the floor. A sudden kick against the back legs of the chair when he was tilted would certainly give me an advantage.

No sooner had I thought of it than I went into action. As he fell backwards I hurled myself at him, pinioning his arms. He managed to get the gun out of his pocket, but I rolled the chair over his arm and he let go of the gun. I seized it and placed it against the back of his head with considerable force.

The fight had lasted less than a minute. He lay there quietly, and I reckoned that he would be out for an hour at least. He seemed to trust me completely for he didn't say a word when I tiptoed out of the room, with my baggage and the painting. Bazin was out of the picture.

I met the girls as arranged and made excuses for

Paul's absence. Then I suggested that we might talk business before dinner.

'Let's eat first. There's no hurry—we have all night,' said Inez.

This disturbed me. They didn't seem to be so eager for the painting as they had been at lunch. Perhaps they were only hungry . . . perhaps. I didn't like their attitude at all.

At length we appeared to have run the gamut of the courses. They said it was the best meal that they had had in Paris.

'I am very pleased that you are pleased,' I said. 'And now that we have eaten, let us finish our business. The Renoir is all wrapped up . . .'

'But we haven't had our brandy yet, Harry,' interrupted Inez.

There was definitely something wrong. They were obviously stalling. But stalling for what? I was getting very uneasy. The waiter brought the cognac and they sipped it a drop at a time. For fifteen minutes they dawdled over it. I decided I could not wait any longer and forced the issue.

'And now, if you will forgive me,' I said, 'I must bring up the matter of the painting again. If you haven't got the money, why don't you say so? It's perfectly all right. But I am afraid that we will have to do it right now or not at all.'

They looked at each other for a moment. Then Aurora passed an envelope over to me. 'Here's the money; you can count it,' she said.

'I trust you. I won't even open the envelope. And here is *your* Renoir. I hope you will enjoy it as I have.'

At that moment a little man in a shabby suit came over to our table. 'I'm sorry to be late; I just couldn't get away,' he said to the two girls.

Inez introduced us. 'Monsieur Bordet—Harry Lime.'

'Monsieur Bordet is an expert on Renoir's paintings. He's from the Louvre Museum,' added Aurora.

There was silence for a moment. I looked around to see if I could make a quick dash for it, but Monsieur Bordet had brought a gendarme with him. He knew it was a fraud. There was nothing I could do but sit and wait. He unwrapped the picture carefully and slowly. Then he looked it over, his brow wrinkled in furrows.

'How much did you pay for this, mademoiselle?' he asked at length.

'Five million francs.'

'Amazing!' he said to himself.

Inez asked him what he meant.

'I can't believe it,' he went on.

'What's wrong with it,' asked Aurora.

He looked up. 'It's genuine. It's a real Renoir. It's worth twenty million francs!'

So it turned out that I was honest after all. The shock of it disturbed me for many days. And I was not only honest but generous. The museum offered the girls fifteen million francs for the painting.

I had one consolation, however: Aurora was very sweet to me during the rest of her stay. It was a very sad farewell, when she departed for Brazil. She wept bitterly, and I promised to wait for her return to Paris.

Perhaps we will meet again. It's all in the hands

of fate. But I think that fate had better decree otherwise. It will be wiser if our friendship always remains just a beautiful memory.

For at our parting I unwittingly took a string of sapphires from her neck. I didn't send them back to her. I reckoned they were small compensation for the profit she had made out of me.

LOVE AFFAIR

by

Sigmund Miller

Like a will-of-the-wisp borne on the winds of adventure, I dropped in on that curious adventure of modern and ancient that comprise the tiny city of Becurata, hidden away in a remote corner of Saudi-Arabia. Mines of black gold—oil derricks—dot the landscape as far as the eye can see: and huddled beneath these modern steel skeletons lies a city as old as the Orient. Curio dealers hawk their wares in the narrow, winding streets; beggars doze in shadowed doorways; robed Arabs mingle with Europeans in soiled whites; and the city drowns with the indolence of Asia—an ideal place for a murder and a double double-cross. For the oil was there to grease the skids of fortune for . . . Harry Lime.

I WAS IN a café with a character called Schweig who was anxious for me to clinch an oil contract with the Alafin—the local ruler—on behalf of his government. I, too, was anxious . . . to get paid. I told him that I had an appointment with Alafin at his summer palace late that afternoon and that I hoped to clinch the deal then. I brought up the matter of payment again; and he passed a slip of paper across the table.

'Hey, what's this,' I said as soon as I'd taken one look at it. 'This hardly covers my hotel bill and my fare getting here. Are you trying to . . .'

'I leave Becurata to-day, but your final payment will be waiting for you at the Bank Internationale . . . when you have concluded the negotiations.' His tone was final.

'But how will anyone at the bank know when I've . . .'

'They'll know, Harry, they'll know.'

I was still burning about the size of the cheque as I left Schweig and headed for the Bank Internationale. I wondered how it was possible for someone employed by the bank to know when the Alafin had acceded to my 'requests'. As I entered the shabby monument to finance I searched the bland, inscrutable faces behind the cages, but they told me nothing. Well, I'd come to cash the cheque, not to play charades. I slid the infuriating piece of paper through the opening in the window of the chief teller—a lovely looking lad, if you care for pock-marked, beady-eyed, murderous type. He glanced at the cheque and then up at me.

'Do you want my credentials?' I asked.

'That won't be necessary. You're already well known in the city, Mr. Lime.'

I was on my way back to my hotel, with the miserable pittance that Shweig's government thought a suitable reward for my services, when a stranger came up to me. 'I apologise for approaching you on the street, but I must speak to you at once,' he said.

'Who are you?'

'My name wouldn't mean anything to you,

but I can tell you this: I am no friend of Karl Schweig.'

I took a look at him. A man who would have passed unnoticed in a crowd, his face had a certain strength of character when you took a second look.

'May I drive you back to your hotel,' he continued.

'I . . . I have my own car.' It was a lie.

'You do not own a car, Mr. Lime, and the Citroen that you rented—you did not use it to-day. You left it in the hotel garage to be serviced. You want it in good running order for your trip to the Alafin's summer palace later in the day.'

He seemed to know everything, and I wanted to know more about him, so I said that I would be delighted to accept a lift in his car. When we were settled in the back seat of his luxurious limousine, and were speeding towards my hotel, he drew a packet from his pocket, and, without saying a word, handed it to me. I opened it and saw . . . a stack of American hundred-dollar bills.

'It's yours,' he said.

I must have looked quizzical, for he went on:|

'My name is Mordecai Varin . . .'

I couldn't help interrupting. 'Well, so far you're being honest. A man wouldn't invent a name like that.'

He smiled. 'I shall continue to be honest.' There was a pause, during which he looked at me, and then continued: 'Mr. Lime, we are both here in Becurata for the same thing. There are two major differences; you want the leases for the country who gave you that niggardly cheque you just cashed at the bank.

I want the leases for another power. To date, you have been successful; I have not been.'

'I have no signed agreements,' I pointed out.

'You will have. Authoritative sources tell me that it has become a personal thing between you and the Alafin. You've exercised great charm on him. He will sign the leases made out by you—to whatever power *you* select.'

'Maybe.' I wasn't giving anything away.

'I know how your mind works. I've worked with men like you for years. Your loyalties belong to the highest bidder. In your hand you hold the highest price yet offered for your services. When you present the contracts to the Alafin, I am sure they will contain the name of the *right* country.'

A moment later I was walking towards the bar of my hotel. I wasn't clutching the money Varin had offered me, in my tight little fist any more. No. It was making a comforting bulge in my wallet. But, as I reached the bar, I was wondering how I was going to keep all my 'customers' happy. The long mahogany gate to forgetfulness was deserted except for a character by the name George Harris, a creep who earned his meagre income by acting as a sort of glorified guide for American tourists.

You may gather that Harris and I were scarcely the best of buddies. One thing that irked me in particular was his habit of giving a little indoctrination lecture to his charges, a part of which was a warning to keep away from a very unsavoury American expatriate by the name of Harry Lime.

So I decided that the open air would be a good place to get his stink out of my nostrils, and went out

of the other door into the piazza. And there . . . well, there was a new note . . . a lovely, fresh-looking girl—American, to judge by her looks. She had the sort of innocence that only a Reynolds could have captured . . . or a Harry Lime. And there wasn't a hovering mother, chaperon, or a tourist's guide in sight.

'I say . . . you *didn't* drop your handkerchief,' I said.

It was a variation of the old gambit.

'What!'

'If you had, I could have picked it up and returned it to you. We would have started talking, and I could have offered to show you the city.'

'I have a guide, thank you,' but she was smiling . . . a charming, innocent, yet provocative smile.

'Yes, but I could show you places that George Harris wouldn't dream of taking a seventeen-year-old girl to.'

'I'm nineteen.'

She was weakening, so I went on: 'Oh, I'd been wondering. . . . I've been wondering about a few other things, too. . . .'

But she suddenly became cold. 'You must be the Harry Lime Mr. Harris was telling me about.'

'Surely I'm not the only man in Becurata capable of speculating a bit about a beautiful American girl.'

'I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Lime, but the others will be coming out of lunch soon. I mustn't be seen talking to you in broad daylight.'

'But it won't be broad daylight for ever. Perhaps we'll meet this evening, Miss . . .?'

‘Perhaps.’

And she was gone.

The girl was lovely, but with all her loveliness she was pushed to the back of my mind as I neared the summer palace of the Alafin later that afternoon. I had plenty to think about. I was committed to *two* countries. Schweig had agents in the city to see that the oil leases were awarded to *his* country; and I was sure Varin had men watching to see that I didn’t double-cross *him*.

My rented Citroen was behaving nicely, and I guess I wasn’t watching the road too carefully because suddenly the ordinarily deserted pavement became crowded and I had to pull to a stop. Arabs riding burros crowded about the car. There were some half-castes, on foot, climbing the running-boards. In front of the car were three or four fierce-looking Bedouins with old-fashioned muskets slung over their shoulders. Suddenly, from out of the crowd, a figure came up to the car.

‘Good afternoon, Mr. Lime,’ he said as he opened the door.

I remembered where I had seen him before. ‘You’re the chief teller from the Bank Internationale!’ I said.

‘That’s one of my occupations. Move over, Mr. Lime; we have things to talk about before your meeting with the Alafin.’

Of course, the beady-eyed, pock-marked Arab who sat beside me was Schweig’s agent in the bank. He had seen me get into Mordecai Varin’s car after I had left the bank that morning, and had joined me

to point out that it might not be too healthy to go against Schweig's wishes. We arranged to meet in the bar of the hotel after I had seen the Alafin: there I would get paid, and would be able to get out of town before Varin found out in whose favour the leases were made.

My meeting with the high potentate of Becurata was an infuriating ordeal of delay. Somehow or other the granting of oil rights seemed to be inexorably tied up with native dances and ceremonies and rituals. Before the crass business of the leases could be discussed the shadows were deep in the gardens outside the palace. And even then the cautious old man wouldn't sign anything. The best I could manage was to leave the contracts with him, and get in exchange a half promise that he *would* sign them—and I had made them out—within the week. I had to be content with that. And as I drove back to the city, parked my car behind the hotel, and made my way to the bar, I wondered if Schweig's fascinating messenger boy would be content with the arrangements. He was waiting for me there all right.

'You nedn't summon the waiter,' he said as I came up to the table. 'I took the liberty of ordering an absinthe for you.'

'Very thoughtful. I hope that you were also thoughtful enough to bring the money with you.'

He smiled. 'I came prepared, but I have been informed that the Alafin did not sign the contracts.'

It was what I had expected. 'Look,' I said, 'if you know they weren't signed, you also know I made them out the way you wanted them. My job here is finished. Even if I wanted to stick around in

Becurata until the old dodo gets around to signing them, I couldn't. Not with Varin in town. I want the money I've got coming to me.' I seized his lapel and looked into his beady eyes. 'Now! Do you understand—now!'

He hesitated. 'I'm not sure Schweig would approve . . .'

I kept hold of him. 'You've got the money in your side pocket. I can see the bulge. Now pull it out and start. . . .' A shot rang out, and the teller slumped forward against my chest.

'Watch out, Lime,' he gasped. 'Varin . . . Varin knows. . . .'

He must have been dead almost before I reached over and took the money from his side pocket. And I could hear him topple from his chair as Varin and a handful of thugs burst into the room through the doorway from which one of them had shot him. They fired a couple of shots after me as I streaked out of the back door, but I reached the rear of the hotel and jumped into the Citroen.

I stepped on the starter, and, as the motor caught, I clashed the gears and the car leaped towards a narrow, tortuous street. I wasn't sure where it led, but already I could hear other cars starting behind me. Natives and animals sprang out of my way as I careered down the winding street.

The cars were farther away now, but ahead of me I could see people milling about near a dimly lit café. There was a figure in white, and suddenly I could see it was the girl, the American girl from the hotel.

She dashed out into the road. I skidded to a stop. She was in the car beside me in an instant.

'Get me away from here quickly,' she gasped.

'What were you doing in the native quarter?' I asked after a few minutes' furious driving.

Her sentences came in jerks. She was as pale as a sheet. 'I . . . I . . . George Harris wouldn't take me where I . . . where I wanted to go. . . . I slipped out of the hotel after dinner. . . . I went to the native café back there . . . a horrible place . . . two natives came up . . . I tried to get out . . . I was never so happy to see anyone in my life.'

I was silent for a little while. An idea was forming in my brain. After a little while, I asked: 'I'm not going too fast?'

'The farther I get from that horrible place the better I like it.' Her tone was firmer now.

'Cold?'

'A little.'

'Pull the robe up around you . . . and you could sit a little closer to me.'

She moved over. Then, shyly, 'How's that?'

'Fine, just fine. But do you think it's "proper" to sit so close when you haven't even told me your name?'

She was silent for a moment. Then she asked: 'You won't take me back to that horrible city?'

Nothing was farther from my intentions. 'I've suddenly developed an allergy to it myself,' I said.

She smiled. 'Well, my name's Marion Lawrence. I'm an orphan. A distant relative died a few months ago and left me a little money. I quit my job and decided to take a world cruise.'

'Have you your passport with you now,' I asked. I tried to make my tone casual.

She hesitated. 'No, I haven't,' she said at last.

'Well, I know someone near the border who's a very talented engraver. However, we might obviate a lot of trouble by having him make out our passports with some new names . . . say, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith of Cleveland, Ohio.' I looked at her to see how she was taking it. 'How does it sound to you?'

She gave a laugh. 'It sounds real exciting. Like we were spies, or espionage agents, or something.'

It was working perfectly. Marion was enthralled with the excitement and romance of our 'adventure'. It would take time for Varin, and whoever else might be following me, to pick up the trail. I knew that Harry Lime had a well-established reputation as a lone wolf. For Harry Lime to marry was unthinkable. Harry Lime was known to move in certain fixed cosmopolitan circles. He never adopted aliases or disguises.

But by the time we'd crossed the border, all of that was changed. Marion and I were Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith of Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. . . . It was working perfectly, because Marion was the perfect bride, adoring, starry-eyed. Yes, she was really in love with me. And because she was in love with me, she asked no embarrassing questions. There was an added feature, too. It had become apparent that her little 'inheritance' wasn't so little after all. Her purse contained a roll of large denomination bills big enough to choke a customs official.

We crossed border after border, and Becurata was a long way back now. But I kept imagining that I saw Varin as we went through customs offices. I thought I caught a glimpse of Schweig as we ate

dinner in a funny little restaurant in Istanbul. And even though I thought I'd seen him die, I could have sworn I saw the pock-marked face of the chief teller of the Bank Internationale as we walked into a railway office in Bucharest. And the funny thing was the more nervous and irritable I became, the more affection Marion seemed to lavish on me. She sneaked out and bought me little presents everywhere we stopped; beautiful dressing-gowns, pipes, bottles of hard-to-get absinthe. And finally, what with her affection and the growing distance between ourselves and Becurata, I began to relax. By the time we'd reached Vienna, I think I'd almost begun to enjoy my role as a somewhat bucolic tourist.

We were sitting in a funny little Austrian restaurant one night listening to a gipsy band and sipping champagne. Marion leaned over and touched the back of my hand. 'Are you happy, "Joe",' she asked.

'Dangerously. The way I feel I might never want to leave here.'

'You know . . . I've never danced with you.'

I laughed. 'I've never cared much for waltzes. If you'll wait until they play a foxtrot. . . .'

'In Vienna,' she mocked me.

I reached over to pour her out another glass of champagne.

'There seems to be plenty for all of us,' a voice said over my shoulder. It was George Harris! He sat down, saying, 'You don't mind if I join you?'

Marion had gone pale. 'What do you want here,' I asked as he poured himself a glass of champagne.

'I don't want to start a riot here; there are too many people. But I have armed men at every door and

window, so any attempt at escape would be useless.' His tone was calm and confident.

'You talk like a cop,' I laughed.

'I'm with the F.B.I. of the United States. By the way, Lime, I think you might be interested in knowing that Alafin got a little tired of all your intrigue. He has awarded the oil leases to the U.S.'

'So, then Schweig's after me too.' He nodded in agreement. 'But what charges have *you* got against me?'

'Charges? We have no charges against you.' His tone grew as friendly as an ice-cube. 'It isn't against the law to be a skunk.'

I looked at him in bewilderment.

'I've just been helping the Becurata authorities to track down your sweet little bride,' he explained.

Marion was weeping now. 'I'm sorry, Harry,' she murmured.

'The night you picked her up in Becurata, she was fleeing from the hotel,' Harris went on, 'where she'd just shot and killed her ageing husband. Are you ready to leave, Marion?'

'Y-e-s.' Her reply was almost inaudible.

They got up to leave. Then Harris turned to me and said: 'We traced you through the bills your "wife" spent on the trip. You see, her doting husband had cashed a large cheque at the Bank Internationale a few hours before she killed him. The chief teller fortunately made a list of the serial numbers.'

So even in death he was giving me trouble.

They reached the door. Then Harris turned and delivered his parting shot: 'Next time, Harry Lime, I wouldn't let the woman pay.'

Well, it was a short marriage, but a very pleasant one—and if you should settle down somewhere and start enjoying easy living, rich food, and fine liquor, don't worry about what it will do to your figure. Just worry about the fat it tends to develop . . . between the ears.

SEE NAPLES AND LIVE

by

Sigmund Miller

There was once an exquisite and huge emerald locket which spent most of its time looking out at the world from the rather fleshy neck of Mrs. Donaldson as she waddled like a golden duck across the international social horizon. I had a rather strong desire to change the habitat of this locket from her cool neck to my itching palm. It was in Naples, 1937 . . .

I WAS STANDING in the customs' shed beside the pier where a certain vessel was about to dock. That vessel was carrying precious freight—Mrs. Donaldson. I had already made arrangements with the customs officials that Mrs. Donaldson would be somewhat delayed and that her baggage would be extensively searched. A five thousand lire note had done the trick.

An hour later I was standing beside a pillar watching my quarry. She was fiftyish, voluble, gullible, and somewhat foolish. At that particular moment she was very, very angry.

'You stubborn man—I tell you there is no contraband in my luggage,' she was saying to an imperturbable customs officer. 'You have already gone through my clothes twice with your dirty hands. Aimee, talk

to this man. He doesn't understand a word of English.'

'My Italian is worse than his English,' remarked a girl at her side. She had auburn hair and eyes to match the emerald, and she was as sensitive and shy as Mrs. Donaldson was garrulous and gushing. I guessed that she was the hired companion.

I moved across and asked what was troubling them.

Mrs. Donaldson's face lit up. 'Thank heavens—an American!' she exclaimed. 'I have no idea why this idiotic official is rummaging through my clothes. One might think I was a smuggler or something. I've been to Naples many times, and there's never been this ridiculous fuss. I'll talk to the American Consul and see that this man loses his job. I wonder if you could talk to him—that is, if you speak Italian.'

The man growled to me that there was a regulation that they had to examine every twenty-fifth passenger. I said that I would vouch for the lady, and handed him my card.

He looked at it. Then he said with great respect: 'I am sorry to have caused Madame all this trouble. She may pass.'

When the suit-cases were closed, I offered to give them a lift to their hotel in my car.

'Oh, I wouldn't want you to bother,' simpered Mrs. Donaldson.

'No bother at all. One American to another, you know.'

'Thank you. These taxi-drivers rob you mercilessly,' she said after a moment's pause.

'It's a pleasure. My name is Lime. Harry Lime.'

We shook hands. 'I'm Mrs. Frederica Donaldson,

and I am so glad that we ran into you.. A wonderful piece of luck.'

'Let us say that we are well met.'

I hummed a little tune happily as we drove towards their hotel. Loveliness was gracing my car, loveliness in the form of the emerald locket around Mrs. Donaldson's neck and loveliness in the form of Aimee Collins. I had guessed right: she *was* Mrs. Donaldson's hired companion. And I also began to guess that she liked me. Every so often I would catch Aimee's eye, and she would hastily turn away as if she were guilty of something.

Mrs. D. gushed happily on about the delay, the humiliation, and their luck in bumping into me. I made suitable noises whenever she paused for breath. Then, at last, she gave me my cue.

'I wish we could repay you for your kindness,' she exclaimed.

'Well . . . I think perhaps you can.'

'Wonderful . . . just tell us what it is.'

'Well, I've got to buy my sister a gift,' I said tentatively. 'It's her birthday. I don't know much about jewellery . . . so I wonder if either of you could come along and help me shop?'

'Of course we can,' Mrs. Donaldson cried. 'Aimee does most of my shopping for me. She's very good at it. I'm sure she would be delighted to help you.'

I turned towards Aimee. 'You don't mind, do you, Miss Collins?'

'Oh, no, not at all.' She looked very pleased.

'Good—that's a relief. And I would like both of you to be my guests at dinner to-night.'

Mrs. Donaldson accepted with alacrity, and soon afterwards we deposited her at her hotel, and then Aimee and I went shopping. I took her along to the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, one of Naples' better thoroughfares.

We walked along silently for a while, looking into the windows. Then she remarked: 'Life is very strange, isn't it?'

'Why?'

'Well, just half an hour ago you and I were total strangers. Now here I am helping you to buy a gift as if . . . as if we had known each other for a long time.'

I said that there was nothing wrong in that.

'No,' she replied doubtfully. 'It's—er—just that the moment you came upon the scene things seemed to move fast—and efficiently.'

I tried to laugh it off. 'You make it sound as if it were my fault.' But the thought flashed across my mind that perhaps I *was* forcing the pace a little too much.

She apologised. 'I suppose I sound foolish.'

'Perhaps it's because you liked me too soon.'

She looked embarrassed. A faint blush appeared on her cheek. 'You have a way of condensing relationships quickly,' she murmured.

I remarked that if people like each other they don't need a calendar full of time to tell them.

'Good things grow slowly,' she began. 'Then she broke off in evident relief: 'Ah, here's a shop.'

We stood and looked into the window. I pointed to a filigree pin that took my fancy.

'I am begging your pardon. I heard you conversing

in English,' said a voice over my shoulder. I looked round and saw a small, dark, swarthy man. I wasn't glad to see him.

'I am trying to reach Via Salvator Rossa. Could you inform me how to get there,' he went on imperturbably.

I directed him as briefly as possible, and then turned away. But he showed no sign of going. 'I am much grateful. Perhaps you would like a cigarette,' he continued.

'No, thank you.'

'I am unhappy to trouble you further, but do you have a match?'

I said that I was sorry but I didn't have any with me.

'I have a light,' said Aimee.

'Madame is most generous.'

When his cigarette was alight, he bowed to us and raised his hat. 'Good day to you both. Perhaps we will meet again.'

There was a long pause while we looked into the window. But I wasn't thinking about jewellery. I was thinking about Rubio, for that the character's name. I had been foolish enough to broach my little scheme to get Mrs. Donaldson's emerald to him some time back. In fact I had offered to cut him in for a share of the proceeds in return for his help in disposing of the jewel—for that was how he earned his living. But on second thoughts I had decided to work on my own: there would be more profit that way. However, he had not taken my decision kindly and had joined the innumerable caravan that helped to make me the most threatened man in Europe. Not

that I was afraid of his threats, but his presence might easily prove embarrassing.

Aimee interrupted my musings. 'Did you ever see him before?' she asked.

'Why do you ask that?'

She remarked that he had acted as if he knew me.

'Well, I didn't care to know him.'

'I think you gave him the wrong directions,' she went on. I remained silent, and she added with a smile, 'It seems to me that if he followed your directions he would find himself in the Bay of Naples.'

I laughed. 'I'm sure it won't dampen his spirits. Shall we go in now, and buy that filigree pin?'

I bought the pin for twenty-five hundred lire. On the way back to Aimee's hotel she was pensive and not given to talking much. I took her by the hand; she did not object, but neither did she react to the touch. To put it simply, she let me hold her hand, nothing more. I suspected that Rubio had made too strong an impression: it was essential that now I work fast. The emerald would have to be in my pocket that night, or not at all.

However, I wasn't worried about Rubio. Strangely enough it was Aimee that bothered me. I was beginning to be extraordinarily fond of her and that was bad. I make it a point not to be too fond of anyone in this world.

That evening I took the two of them to one of the best restaurants in town. I ordered a delicious meal, and we washed it down with a more than adequate supply of spumante—the Italian version of champagne. Mrs. Donaldson was becoming thoroughly

relaxed, for spumante is a fine relaxer. And just to make more certain I stirred her drink with a little wooden swizzle stick, the bottom of which was well laced with phenobarbitol. My keynote for the evening, as you can see, was relaxation. Before the evening was over my emerald guest was going to be the most relaxed woman in Italy, and then her somewhat puffy neck would be without its most attractive ornament.

I filled the glasses again. 'A toast to us. May we always be as happy as we are now,' I said.

'A toast to you, Mr. Lime, you wonderful, wonderful man,' she replied.

I patted her neck. I wanted her to get used to the touch of my hand against her neck. She withdrew a little. For her neck had become sensitive because of the locket. As we drank I studied the clasp on it. It was a simple device. You turned a tiny wheel and it released the catch . . . just a twist of the wrist.

I called the musicians over to our table, and asked Mrs. Donaldson what she would like them to play. She asked for some Neapolitan songs.

It was going to be very easy. They were completely at ease and they trusted me. Aimee stole her hand into mine as they played. It was really quite pleasant. I leaned back and relaxed.

When the songs were over, I suddenly said: 'I have a wonderful idea. How about going for a drive to Pompei?'

'At this hour?' said Mrs. Donaldson doubtfully.

'It's only ten o'clock. There's a full moon. It will be quite a thrill.'

'I'm willing to go if Mrs. Donaldson is,' murmured Aimee.

'Try and stop me. What a marvellous idea,' said Mrs. Donaldson as she made up her mind.

As we stood up, I remarked that there was just one thing that worried me. I suggested that it might be safer if she left her locket in the hotel safe.

'Don't you worry about it,' she answered. 'I never take it off my neck, except when I retire. It's perfectly safe. Besides we won't find any criminals in Pompei.'

'All the same, I'd feel better if you would leave the locket . . .'

She interrupted me: 'Oh, no, I can't do that. Please don't fret about it.'

On the way out of the restaurant we passed a table at which a solitary man was sitting. It was Rubio. He got up and invited us to join him in a bottle of wine. I refused somewhat shortly.

'You have offended me, sir,' he said.

'That's really too bad.'

'I know we shall meet again. Perhaps the next time you will have more time. You may even regret that you have offended me, Señor.'

As soon as we were out of earshot, Mrs. Donaldson remarked that he was a very odd man.

'Are you sure you don't know him, Harry?' asked Aimee.

'I know him now,' I admitted. 'His name is Alfonso Rubio. And I'm genuinely sorry he didn't follow my directions and walk into the Bay of Naples.'

It was less than an hour's ride to the ancient extinct city of Pompei, lying like a corpse at the foot of its killer Vesuvius. We entered through the garden of an ancient home. The moon shone down, hard and

white, lighting up the ancient city. As we walked down the Abbondoza Street, even I began to feel the excitement of a moonlight night in such a place.

After some half an hour's walking, Mrs. Donaldson said that she would like to sit down: she was feeling a little sleepy.

'There's a marble bench in the atrium of Casa de Cerialo,' I said. 'It used to belong to an arrogant rich man who didn't like strangers visiting his palatial home. But somehow I don't think he will mind.'

When we reached the bench, Mrs. Donaldson rested her head sleepily against my shoulder: 'You're a darling, Mr. Lime,' she remarked.

'Aimee, if you walk into the room to your right, you will see some excellent frescoes, beautifully preserved,' I suggested. She borrowed my flashlight and moved away.

Mrs. Donaldson was sleeping softly. I pressed my fingers against her neck to check her responses. There was no reaction. I tried it again so that even in her sleep she would feel no alarm, become acquainted with the feel of my fingers around her throat. She slept peacefully on. I quickly unloosed the catch and with slow care picked the locket gently off her neck. At the same time I held her hand so as to divert her sensation of touch. It was done quickly. And now I was ready to make my departure. I gently propped her against a pillar.

But then I heard a sound that froze me. Footsteps, and they weren't Aimee's!

I caught a glimpse of him. It was one of the guards. There was only one thing to do—run! At the Strade Stabione I turned the corner and ran into one of the

Roman baths. I made for one of the rooms, expecting it to have another exit. It was dark and I fumbled around. I had a very unpleasant feeling when I became aware that the only way out was the way I had come in. I ran back, but it was too late. My pursuer was standing at the entrance with a flashlight in one hand and a gun in the other.

It was not a guard. It was Rubio!

I'm not usually a reckless fellow, but this time I did a very rash thing. I rushed him.

He fired. The bullet tore a hole in my jacket, barely touching my skin.

I grabbed hold of him. We fell on the marble floor. In a few seconds it was clear that he was in far better shape than I. Then he hit me a very rude blow on the head with his gun, and I gave up the fight. For a moment I just lay there, thinking what a very evil moment of my life this was.

'The locket!' he demanded. I threw it over to him.

'Thank you,' he snarled. 'And now I think I will dispose of you for having caused me all this trouble.'

I closed my eyes. But the shot never came.

'Drop the gun, Señor, or I will fire,' said another voice. It was one of the guards.

He hesitated and then saw several other armed guards in the doorway. He dropped his gun. Poor Rubio was caught red-handed with my goods.

I must admit that I have a fine sense of humour. I lay there on the marble floor and laughed.

Well, of course I was quite the little hero. Mrs. Donaldson was quite convinced that I had risked my life to save her locket. She insisted on giving me a small gift as compensation for the bullet-hole in my

suit, and a bump on my head. I refused at first but she insisted and I finally accepted it—a hundred pounds.

Back at the hotel, Mrs. Donaldson went straight up to bed. I asked Aimee to stay behind for a moment.

‘Let’s meet for lunch to-morrow,’ I suggested.

‘No, Harry.’

‘Why not.’

‘I never saw the frescoes on the wall,’ she said slowly.

I gaped at her. She gave a wry smile, and continued: ‘No, I couldn’t find them. So I walked all the way around. I saw you from the front entrance.’

There was a long pause.

‘I was beginning to like you very much, Harry,’ she said sadly.

‘You don’t want to see me again . . . ever?’ I asked.

‘It will never be any good.’

I pulled something out of my pocket. ‘Well, you might as well have the filigree pin.’

‘What about your sister?’

I laughed. ‘I haven’t spoken to my sister in ten years. She doesn’t approve of me. Here take it.’

She hesitated.

‘Please,’ I went on, ‘This is one of the few nice things I’ve ever done. If you don’t take it, I’ll throw it away.’

She stretched out her hand. ‘Thank you, Harry. Good night . . . and good-bye!’

As I walked to my hotel I thought about the whole affair. It had cost me about a hundred dollars to bribe the customs official, to buy the champagne and the filigree pin. The reward left me with a profit of

two hundred and seventy-odd dollars, plus a bump on my head and a hole in my suit. I had lost the lovely green emerald . . . and the lovely green eyes of Aimee.

The emerald didn't bother me too much. But Aimee . . . ah . . . Aimee. She nearly interfered with the great romance of my life . . . my love for Harry Lime.

EVERY FRAME HAS A SILVER LINING

by

Robert Cenedella

'A fellow I once knew told me I was a poet, but he was so wrong. Poets are always singing about daffodils and brooks and skylarks and the women they are faithful to—a sort of 'Merry Widow Waltz'.

I, IF I sang at all, would sing about money and the women I've known, but in an off-beat rhythm. Money and women: somehow they go together. Neither is much use without the other, is it?

At least that is the stuff that Harry Lime sings about: those are the themes to which he dances in life's ballet. Sometimes it is pleasant; occasionally it is a little painful, like the time in Teheran.

It happened some years ago. I had just arrived there, and I felt that in a country with so much oil and so much intrigue, with so many rogues playing the game of Empire-building and Empire-busting, I could promote something suited to my special talents.

Musing along these lines, I was walking along a street near the docks when I heard some shouting. A small frightened man, out of breath and frantic, came wheeling around the corner and piled into me head on.

'Hey, where's the fire,' I asked.

'Out of my way,' he panted in a strong Greek accent. As he was pushing me aside, he glared into my face. 'Harry Lime!' he exclaimed.

It was an old friend of mine, rejoicing in the name of Pappas. But I suppose that wasn't his fault.

He thrust a package into my hands, and spoke quickly. 'The police are after me. That is fifty thousand dollars' worth of opium. To-night, at 7.30, bring it to the Grand Hotel. My principals will be there; we'll cut you in.'

The shouting grew closer. 'I'm with you,' I said after a moment's hesitation. 'Beat it—duck down this alley.'

I waited until both hare and hounds had disappeared. It was a change for me to be a spectator in such circumstances. Then I did some running on my own account—to my hotel. I repacked my bag, making certain to conceal among my handkerchiefs and shirts the package that my friend Pappas had been so very kind to give me. Then I reserved a seat on the two o'clock plane for Paris.

In Paris I knew I would be safe. Whoever the 'principals' were that Pappas had spoken of, they would undoubtedly make a fuss over my leaving Teheran with their property. But I didn't mind, for I was now the sole owner of fifty thousand dollars' worth of opium.

In the plane I decided that I would get the best price for it in America. So my problem in Paris would be how I should smuggle it into the States. I couldn't take it in myself. The customs officers might search me a little too thoroughly. So I set about to

find some likely tourist into whose luggage I'd be able to put my package.

It took me three days to find my American—a very lovely looking American incidentally—outside a café. She was a lovely, fresh, unspoiled girl, sitting watching the Parisian scene. Some men would merely have looked at her hungrily until the café closed. But not Harry Lime.

I introduced myself. She said that she was waiting for her parents.

'I'd like to meet them.'

She said that I was rude, and continued to watch the Parisian scene.

'You don't really believe that. You know a man can see a girl and know that this is *the* girl, the one he's always wanted to meet but has never met. If he doesn't speak, she goes away and he never sees her again. So is it rudeness if he speaks to her; or is it wisdom?' I pleaded earnestly.

She laughed, and I asked if I might sit beside her.

'Well . . . since my parents are coming . . .'

Once I was sitting down the rest was easy. Helen Bolt was in the last week of a continental tour with her parents. They came from Yangstown, a small city in the mid-west. Her brother had been killed in the war, and one reason for their visit was that they had wanted to see his grave.

I was very solicitous when she told me this. Then I asked her at what time she was to meet her parents.

'In an hour,' she replied. 'But I didn't know where else to go.'

'Good, then we have at least an hour.'

'For what?'

‘For me to show you Paris.’

We went to the garden of the Tuileries, and though I was tempted to see whether I could wean this girl away from her parents for the whole evening, I for once acted the perfect gentleman. Refinement is one of my many skills. It is boring—but useful in my trade.

This girl and her mid-western parents were perfect to smuggle the opium into the U.S. for me. So I questioned her with real interest about herself and her family.

All Americans are happy to meet compatriots abroad. All Americans but I, that is; and this time even I was delighted.

I took her back to the café, met her parents and took them all to dinner.

It was a dreadful evening. Yes, sir, I knew every street in Yangstown by the end of it. But it was worth it, for they were perfect for my gag—real homespun boobs who wouldn’t suspect I’d planted anything in their luggage, and who wouldn’t be suspected by customs officials. I knew after five minutes that I had the answer to my problem.

After dinner they took me back to their hotel suite, and there, in a city full of the greatest art treasures the world has ever known, I was made to exclaim over the family photograph albums they had brought from Yangstown.

One of my great exclamations, however, was genuine, for I suddenly got an idea. Mrs. Bolt had just handed me a photograph of her dead son:

‘That’s a wonderful picture,’ I said. ‘Why haven’t you had it framed?’

'It sure would look nice in a frame,' said Bolt.

I offered to get one done for them. 'I know where I can get a beauty, and over here things don't cost like in the States. Still we don't have to settle that now, do we? Right now all I'd like is to have you all agree to be my guests on a tour of the city to-morrow.'

They'd like that fine, they said.

'And one other thing, with your permission, I'd like to take Helen to the Folies Bergère, right now.'

'That's up to Helen,' said her mother smilingly.

I looked at the girl, she said she'd like it very much.

Everything was working like a charm. The opium was practically in New York at that moment. I thought once or twice about the 'principals' that Pappas had mentioned; but I was a long way from Teheran, and even if they were after me, I figured I could handle them.

Meanwhile, it was pleasant to make love to Helen. Her voice was soft and sweet . . . so different from her mother's.

In two or three days I was in solid with the family. And Helen . . . well, she was really in love with me by then.

So, the day before they were to leave for Cherbourg, to take the boat for New York, I felt I could move in with my present—a good-sized silver frame for the boy's picture. In my room I opened the little package I had received from Pappas and concealed its contents in the hollow of the frame.

Then I visited the Bolt family in their suite, and made the presentation. They were more than delighted.

But when I offered to go to Cherbourg with them

the next day to see them off, they were at first unwilling. And I had to insist quite hard to get their consent. But I did finally get it. I usually get things I want, when I am insistent.

It was strange though, that they hadn't wanted me to go to Cherbourg with them. I couldn't understand it. But I finally decided that it was just their way of being polite, or not wanting to 'put me out'.

I wanted to go to Cherbourg, because I never believe in leaving anything to chance. I had to know in which suit-case the picture with the silver frame got packed.

So I went to Cherbourg, and the night before they were to sail, I walked with Helen down by the wharves, and said good-bye.

It took a long time, and I still remember the experience with pleasure. But business is business, and I said good-bye to this lovely, charming, unspoiled girl, whom I would have liked to continue to know. Only, of course, what is love compared with fifty thousand dollars' worth of a staple commodity like opium?

I delivered her into the hands of her parents, and before we had a night-cap together, I helped them pack . . . helped them put the frame I had bought them and the opium they didn't know they had into a certain suit-case.

To-morrow I would put them on the boat. Then I would take the plane to America, and before they arrived I would have certain friends of mine ready to hijack that suit-case as soon as they got it through customs. Everything was working for the best in the best of all possible worlds. I slept well.

The next morning, quite early, I went to their room in the hotel.

The room was empty. They had left at two o'clock in the morning.

I stood there in the doorway; looking into the room vacated by my erstwhile friends, and in my mind's ear I heard the voice of Pappas:

'My principals will meet you to-night in the Grand Hotel.'

They *had* met me all right. They met me, and took me. They had known I would want to find some Americans to smuggle the opium into New York. Posing as Americans they could easily get me to hand over the opium to them, to force it on them in fact. Perhaps Pappas, who knew me well, had told them that I liked a pretty face.

Now they were gone . . . so was my opium . . . so was my fifty thousand dollars.

I looked around the room. The picture of the poor dead soldier was lying on the floor. Now if they had only left the frame around it!

I walked to the bureau. Someone had been writing on a paper over the desk blotter, and the pen-nib had borne down hard.

I could just make it out. 'Vingt . . . trois . . . Rue des Pecheurs . . . Marseilles.'

'23 Rue des Pecheurs, Marseilles!'

Twenty minutes later, I boarded the train for Marseilles.

I found that the Rue des Pecheurs was a short, quiet street—quiet to the point of being suspicious: a street with more vacant lots than dilapidated frame houses in need of paint. Number twenty-three was

there—a house with streaked windows, a house seemingly deserted.

No one was watching, so I mounted the steps of the porch with my automatic in my hand.

The door was shut, and I wanted to get in. I rang the bell. It seemed like a logical thing to do.

It opened. On the other side was Pappas.

‘This gun has real bullets in it,’ I remarked, ‘lead the way.’

We went down the passage and into a room at the end. It was quite a family reunion.

‘Hello, darling; hello, mother . . . and father,’ I greeted them sardonically.

Their faces fell.

Mr. B. was the first to recover his composure. ‘Now wait a minute, we’ll make a deal with you,’ he offered. ‘We always intended to cut you in,’ said his wife but her tone didn’t ring true.

‘That’s a silly thing to say, Grace. He knows better,’ interjected Helen.

So she wasn’t a real daughter. I was relieved.

There was a packet on the table. I picked it up. It was the opium.

‘Wait a minute, Harry, listen,’ pleaded Helen. ‘There’s a man coming to pick up that opium and give us the money for it. He’s due here any minute. When you knocked, we thought he had come.’

They again offered to cut me in, but it seemed to me that I could call the tune.

‘Open the door to the next room, Helen,’ I said. When she had done so, I added conversationally: ‘I think it would be nice to tie you people up in there.’

I herded them into the next room, and told them to

tear up the curtains. Then I called Helen over to me:

‘You’re going to tie them up.’

‘And then you’ll tie me up?’

I considered it. Then I asked her if she would like to come with me.

‘Do you mean it,’ she offered eagerly.

I did mean it. We would be an excellent team. Nobody could have been more innocent-looking than her, and nobody could have been more full of excellent ideas for making use of her innocent appearance than I.

‘All right, Harry,’ she said. ‘It’s a deal.’

She tied them up well, and when they complained about the double-cross, she gagged them with every evidence of enjoying her task. Then the two of us went into the other room and waited for the messenger with the money.

It was going to be a merry life, I thought. I was relieved that she was not a little maiden from Yangstown. It was fine not having to pretend.

‘You pretended well,’ she said.

‘Not half so well as you.’

‘Do you love me, Harry?’ Her tone was mocking.

There you are. A woman can have all the wickedness and all the terrible precocious knowledge of a street urchin, and still she remains essentially a woman. Did I love her? Yes, I did.

‘I have a soft spot,’ I explained. ‘I could have left you in that room with the others, I could have taken all the money for myself . . .’

‘I’m glad you have that soft spot. And I am a woman . . . really . . . Harry.’

We were interrupted by a knock at the door. The messenger had arrived. I covered the door with my gun, while Helen opened it.

‘Nous sommes Gendarmes!’ It was the police.

‘Take that gun from him, Jacques,’ said the officer.

‘Wait, wait . . . gentlemen, gentlemen,’ I protested.

‘There will be no waiting, M’sieu. We knew you have opium here. We have been watching this house. We have the man who was to come here with the money.’

Helen sank into a chair. ‘Harry, what can we do?’ she asked.

I turned to the officer. ‘Do you hear her? She is making it sound as though I am one of them,’ I protested.

The policeman looked at me in amazement. Helen’s mouth dropped open.

I went on: ‘You saw me with the gun trained on her. I made her open the door . . . and I was going to take the messenger. I did not realise, of course, that you so efficient policemen had already taken him. I made this girl confess to me where the opium was hidden.’

‘He’s lying! He lured me here! He’s been making love to me,’ she shrieked.

‘Gentlemen, she is a most wicked liar. In a back room you will find the rest of the gang, tied up as I tied them myself. You can easily trace this girl to their people.’

‘You said you loved me!’ she sobbed, with her face in her hands.

I moved over to the captain.

‘Just in case you’re wondering about my angle in

this—I believe your so gracious country offers a reward in cases like this?’

He smiled understandingly.

The policeman rounded up the party, while I watched. As they were marched past me to the door, Helen muttered:

‘You dirty swine, Harry!’

‘Swine? No, darling,’ I replied, ‘I am a realist. And you know, my sweet, though you are so beautiful, I am afraid I cannot undertake to wait for you to get out of whatever bastille is about to embrace you. After all, you may not be beautiful by the time you’re released.’

It was two days before I was able to collect the reward I had worked so hard for. It was, unfortunately, considerably less than fifty thousand dollars but it was enough to afford me consolation for the loss of my sweet Helen.

Ah, well! Perhaps I was well rid of her after all.

I know you probably think I behaved like a complete scoundrel about Helen. But you don’t understand, you see . . . I love someone else far more deeply than Helen . . . and that someone is . . . me.

PARIS IS NOT THE SAME

by

Joseph Cochran

Let's face it. The world is full of mugs . . . millions of them waiting, like flocks of sheep, to be fleeced. In fact they would feel uncomfortable if they weren't shorn to the hide from time to time. I chuckle when I read that one of the mugs was an 'innocent victim' of a confidence game. How innocent? If you want a path beaten to your door, don't use your energy inventing a better mouse-trap: just hang out a sign—'Scarce Items at Prices You Wish To Pay.'

CRIME, ONE WAY, or another, tars us all with the same brush, whether it is Jack the Ripper, or the insignificant mug holding an audience spellbound at the local pub as he relates how he once rubbed shoulders with the famous Jack. Not that I approve of Jack: killing is a messy business. The only man I ever killed was myself. . . . A matter of convenience one time in Paris.

It all began on the Geneva Express, where a pot-bellied man with a bald head was giggling at one of my jokes. I regarded him as a nonentity until he showed me a photograph . . . of a woman whom I at once recognised.

'Very droll, Mr. Lime,' he was saying. 'When I get back to Paris you must visit us.'

‘Us?’

‘Me and my wife . . . Karen. She’ll be delighted with you, and you with her. She appreciates a well told story.’

I regarded him with boredom. He was more than a little tipsy. He reached into his wallet, and withdrew a card.

‘Put it away, and don’t lose it,’ he said as he handed it over to me.

I was looking at the address, when he continued: ‘Ah, here’s what I was looking for. A photograph of my wife.’

I regarded it for a long time. Then I replied, hoping that my speech was even: ‘Very beautiful, M. Duval. My congratulations.’

I continued the conversation with more interest. M. Duval lived in Paris, but made business trips to Switzerland two or three times every year. I remarked that I would not like to be married to such a beautiful woman. I should worry too much, when I was away from her.

‘There’s something to that,’ he said, and gave another of his infuriating giggles. ‘When I go out with Karen, I am the envy of every man in Paris. They do nothing but stare at us as we enter a room. I see them out of the corner of my eyes.’

I asked him how long he would be in Switzerland on this trip.

He answered dejectedly: ‘Three weeks. It’s a long time to be away from her, but I have to think of my business.’

At that moment we started to arrive at the border,

and I got up to collect my bags. Then I held out my hand to him.

'But I thought that you were going on to Geneva?' he said.

I replied that I had other business to attend to first.

When I had got out of the compartment, he leaned through the window and called to me. 'Mr. Lime, don't forget. When in Paris, come to see us. I insist.'

'I won't forget,' I shouted back. 'When next in Paris your home will be my first port of call.'

As the train pulled out of the station, I was asking the station-master the time of the next train to Paris.

Twelve hours later, I was ringing the doorbell of 1149 Rue de Villiers. It was the address on the card that Duval had given me. I told the manservant who answered that M. Duval had invited me to call. I stood in the hall while he went to see if Madame would see me.

I could hear their voices through the door.

A woman's voice said: 'Tell him that M. Duval will not be back until the thirtieth, Andre.'

I started to whistle a little tune that had often been on my lips during the early days of the war. I must have whistled it more loudly than I thought, for Madame Duval changed her mind, and I was quickly ushered into her presence.

She stood at that far end of the room with the morning light streaming through a window on to her auburn hair. 'M. Duval is, unfortunately, out of town,' she said as the servant closed the door. As

soon as he was gone, she went on: 'Harry! In heaven's name! Where did you come from?'

I lit a cigarette. 'I just pop up,' I remarked.

'And disappear again.' Her tone was bitter.

'I like to move about.'

'It wasn't very kind of you not to show up for our meeting at the Savoy in London. I waited all evening.'

I remained silent. Maybe I had been a little harsh on her.

'Never a word of explanation then or ever,' she went on. 'I was afraid you were hurt, had been buried in an air-raid. Oh, Harry, I searched all over London for you. I was frantic.'

There was a pause. Then I tried to change the subject. 'I met your very dull husband on the train. What a bore he is, even without his giggling.'

She turned away.

'And he talks too much . . . about you. He had the vile taste to show me, a stranger, your photograph and boast about his beautiful wife. When I saw the picture, I got off the train and came straight to Paris. I couldn't resist.'

She began to talk quickly. 'When you walked out like that, I thought you were dead. Oh, I knew you were mixed up in something in London, and maybe had to run. But why didn't you let me know? I'd have waited for you. I'd have followed you if I'd only known where to find you. But you didn't. I had to live and . . . and . . .'

I completed her sentence for her: 'You married Duval.'

'Yes.' There was a long pause, after which she

continued: 'He was in the Savoy bar. He saw how anxious I was and offered to help. To help me to find you, Harry!'

Again I remarked that she had married a little bald-headed guy, who giggled.

'He's been good to me, Harry. In his own way he loves me. He's proud of me, and ...'

It was time to get to the point. 'And it all adds up to the fact that you don't love him,' I said with finality.

'I didn't care much after you were gone. It could have been anyone who offered a little security. Life was dull . . . the struggle for food . . . blackened ruins of London . . . the weary faces all around. . . . Why should it surprise you that I should marry a dull man?'

'The place was much the same when I was there,' I pointed out.

'When you were with me, I never noticed or minded, I suppose,' she answered.

I stubbed out my cigarette, and started to walk over towards her. 'No . . . no, Harry! Please, I've tried to forget you, don't make me remember,' she cried. Then her voice broke, and she sobbed: 'Oh, Harry, why did you have to come back? Now I have to start living again!'

And she was in my arms.

A long time afterwards, Andre was helping me on with my overcoat in the hallway. I thanked him.

His voice was low, as he remarked—almost casually—that M. Duval would be very disturbed to know that Madame had greeted me with more affection than a first call had demanded.

'I can imagine his chagrin,' I replied with a grin.

'Would it surprise you to know that I was about to be appointed to an instructorship in philosophy when the war came,' he continued.

'Nothing surprises me.'

'I tell you this to show you what the war can do to people. I was once an idealist. Now I think nothing of peeping on you and Madame.'

He opened the door, and then added apologetically: 'One has to look out for one's self.'

I turned towards him: 'Andre, you don't deserve an instructorship. I learned that by myself when I was ten years old!'

Of course it was Andre who proved to be the nigger in the woodpile. Some days later, Karen burst into my hotel bedroom: 'We've been discovered,' she cried. 'Andre saw me in your arms, and he's threatening to tell my husband. Unless I keep him on, and say nothing about his little racket.'

This sounded interesting. I calmed her down a bit, and then extracted her story.

She had been suspicious of Andre for some time. People had been coming to his room in the basement at all hours of the night. So she had done a little exploring, and had found a lot of perfume—of the kind that her husband manufactured—hidden amongst his things. When she had asked him about it, he had merely laughed, and when she had given him notice, he had threatened to tell her husband about us.

I asked for more details about the racket, but she knew very little. 'Black market of some kind,' she answered. 'It must be very profitable. His bookcases are filled with first editions, and his cupboard is full

of better wine than we can buy. But I don't care about that. What must I do?'

I thought it over. 'Nothing . . . for the present,' I said at last. 'Andre and I are going to have a discussion.'

'About us, Harry?'

'That may enter into it, but the main topic will be business,' I said, as I showed her to the door.

We had our little conversation that same evening. His racket, it appeared, was very simple. American soldiers had money, and wanted Duval's Lure of Eros Perfume. A friend of his at the factory stole it. He sold it—at any price he cared to name.

I remarked that the racket was very badly organised. After all, I should know about these things.

'Your friend will get caught at the next inventory, and you'll be out of business,' I explained.

He was considering this, while I went on: 'You need organisation. This racket is one that has to be worked fast, on a large scale, while the Americans are still here, and before the factories can get into full-scale production. Clean up fast, and then fold!'

Andre remarked that I spoke as if I had had experience.

Within a few hours we were partners, and the business was already expanding.

It expanded fourfold in one very easy way, about which I'll tell you, and, remember, this is only one of the improved methods of production that I introduced.

Andre and I were standing together beside a laboratory bench, and I was demonstrating to him: 'Here are four bottles, three empty and one full of Lure of Eros. I take a hypodermic needle and draw

off three-fourths of the perfume . . . so. Now I put a quarter of an ounce in the three other bottles. Then we will fill all four with distilled water. Then we fill the tiny hole with molten glass, and no one will notice any difference.'

'But when the bottle is opened, it is found out.'

'The soldiers send it home, to girls who've never had a bottle of the stuff, it will not make any difference. In fact we are spreading happiness to three times as many people, as does Duval with his pure concentrated perfume.'

He was unconvinced. 'But after we went to all the trouble to steal a truck-load, it seems wrong not to give them the real thing.'

'Reality is in the imagination. We leave enough of the essence to create the illusion.'

'But can a belief based on a false premise be good?' I had forgotten he was a philosopher, so changed the subject, and asked when Duval was due to return.

'Next week . . . Friday,' he replied.

'I must accept his invitation to call, and be officially introduced to his charming wife,' I remarked.

Then we went back to work.

I duly made my social call and was formally introduced to Karen. Duval, however, did not appear to be his normal self. We discovered the reason for this over cocktails.

'I've had disturbing news,' he said. Putting his hand into his pocket, he produced an ounce bottle of Lure of Eros, and handed it to me. I asked him what was wrong.

'Under the magnifying glass you would see the

bottom has a tiny hole plugged with molten glass. The bottle contains three-parts water.'

I asked him how he had got hold of that particular bottle.

He replied that he had investigators disguised as American soldiers, and one of them had brought it to him. The matter was in the hands of the police, who thought that an expert gang was operating.

But he was really more worried about the damage to his reputation than about any monetary loss that he was suffering from the thefts.

'There'll be complaints, trade investigations. When most of Paris is buying and selling on the Black Market, they will not hesitate to think me guilty of dishonest dealing. My honour is at stake; I must advertise that I am prepared to replace every bottle of watered perfume that turns up.'

I pointed out that that might cost a fortune.

'I must not think of that. I must think of Karen,' he replied with a certain dignity.

We were interrupted by a telephone call for Duval. He excused himself, and went to the study to take it.

When he was gone, Karen said: 'Harry . . . I feel ashamed.'

I told her not to get sentimental.

Then she said decisively: 'I've got to tell Edmund about Andre.'

'If Andre talks, Duval will throw you out,' I reminded her.

'I'll have to take that chance. I don't know . . . maybe I ought to tell him everything, about us, and ask him to forgive.'

'Don't tell me you love the little runt.' I smiled at the idea.

But she was serious. 'Maybe not,' she said after a few moments' consideration. 'At any rate not the way I loved you. But I feel sorry for him. He was thinking of me. After all the killing and misery, it is good to know that someone has a sense of decency. I don't want to be the one to kick the props out from under him.'

At that moment Duval came in. The police had made an important arrest. It was one of the workmen at the factory: and he wanted to see Duval before he made a statement.

On my way out, I managed to have a word with Andre. Half an hour later he was in my hotel room. He had a suit-case with him.

'My friend hasn't talked yet,' he said, 'or I'd have been under arrest by now. But I'm taking no chances. I'm going to hide till this is over.'

I opened a bureau drawer, and gave him a pile of banknotes. It was his share. At that moment there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

'Someone's coming,' he whispered. 'What shall we do if it's the police?'

There was not a moment to be lost. I opened the window. 'Use the fire-escape. . . . Good-bye and good luck, Andre.'

I had barely closed the window again when there was a knock at the door.

It was Duval. He looked ill.

'Come in,' I said. 'What is it? You look ill. Let me get you some wine.'

He sat down heavily on the chair. 'Karen has told me everything,' he blurted out. 'At first I was going

to kill you, but that would hurt her more than taking my own life.'

'Either act would be foolish,' I remarked.

He looked at me with hatred. 'M. Lime,' he said at length, 'I love Karen. I knew she did not love me greatly when I offered marriage, but I felt that she was beginning to have some respect for me, and as time went on she would forget the man who left her waiting at the Savoy. My devotion was having some reward when you came into her life. M. Lime, I would like to make a bargain with you.'

Bargains have always interested me.

'There is reason to believe that you are connected in some way with spurious perfume sales. But we have no proof. Andre has disappeared. In exchange for 50,000 francs, I wish you to leave Paris.'

I told him that that was already my intention.

But, he explained, I had to leave in such a way as to destroy Karen's regard for me. I had to write a letter admitting that I was at the bottom of the perfume swindle.

'I don't intend to show it her,' he concluded. 'It will be in my safe, and will never be used unless I find you in Paris. Then I shall give it to the police. Will you sign?'

'With pleasure,' I replied, remembering the 50,000 francs.

I was on my way to the railway station, well pleased with the profits from my short stay in Paris, when the cab jerked to a halt.

The driver leaned back: 'The street's blocked,' he explained. 'There's been an explosion . . . you'll have to get out. The officer is signalling for the cab.'

A gendarme put his head through the window. 'Sorry, Monsieur, we must get a woman to hospital. . . . Help me with her, driver . . . there is a man back there . . . Would you, Monsieur, be good enough to see if you can help.'

I went over to the injured man, but he was past helping. His head had been completely crushed under a cornice. All I had time to do was to make a minor alteration in his belongings when the officer returned.

'I'll look for identification papers,' he said. 'Ah, here's a wallet.'

'Poor devil . . . who is he?' I asked.

'M. Harry Lime,' was the answer.

It ended, as it began, on the Geneva Express. A pot-bellied man with a bald head came into the compartment and sat opposite to me.

I lowered my newspaper, and coughed.

'M. Duval!'

He turned pale. 'But I thought you were . . .'

I laughed at his amazement, and explained what had happened.

'You have more than kept your bargain to make Karen forget you,' he said at last. 'I asked only that you should stay away from her. But you have done more. Karen grieved for a few weeks, but suddenly, she changed, and now she is quite devoted to me. We are most happy. I owe it all to you.'

For once I was embarrassed. 'Rot! It was convenient to disappear, especially after I signed that letter.'

'Karen,' he went on, 'she is so wonderful and good. I thought that you were entirely bad, I admit, but on

second thoughts I knew differently. I knew that if Karen had once cared for you, you could not be worthless.'

The topic of my goodness was beginning to bore me, so I changed the subject and asked what had happened to Andre.

He had repented of his thefts, and returned much of the money to Duval.

'Where is he now?' I asked.

'He is instructor at the university.'

'Philosophy?'

'Yes, he has a course in moral ethics. They say it is the most popular in the university.'

As the train came to the border, M. Duval looked startled as I got up to stretch. Our eyes met, and he seemed to be asking me if I were getting off. A look of relief came to him as he saw that I was only getting the cigarettes out of my coat on the rack. He settled back and smiled as the train sped on towards Geneva. There was something missing about him that I couldn't quite make out.

Suddenly, as I finished a story, he roared with laughter. I realised what it was.

M. Duval had lost his silly giggle.

FIVE THOUSAND PENGUES AND A KISS

by

Carl Jampel

In my time and day, I've been called many things, most of which I'd rather not repeat here. But strangely enough, the one thing I've never been called is the one thing I really am—a business man. Does that amuse you? Well, let me give you some idea of my philosophy of business.

ALL BUSINESS PAYS in direct proportion to the amount of risk involved, the safest investment, therefore, paying the lowest return. So in a purely financial sense, people outside the law are actually only ambitious business men willing to take the highest risks for the highest returns. Which is why I am personally very fond of Law!

Let me give you an example. Recent political events in Hungary brought about new and strict laws regarding leaving the country. But people have always wanted to leave countries—even so charming a country as Hungary—and they will pay well for certain risky arrangements to be made for them. So inevitably I found myself in Budapest, where I had soon made certain necessary contacts; and then, like any business man, I went looking for customers, which, as in any business, are often found in the nicest places.

That is why, one evening not long ago, I happened to be in the exclusive Club Royale in Budapest. Now the Club Royale is a very lovely place, but not nearly as lovely as the young lady I soon noticed making her way to my table.

I recognised her at once. In fact you would have been hard put to find anyone in Budapest who would not recognise the very famous and equally lovely Helene Barna, actress, singer, and dancer.

She asked me whether I was Harry Lime, and when I had acknowledged that that indeed was my own humble name, she sat down uninvited. After a moment or two, she blurted out: 'Mr. Lime, I must get out of the country, and I understood that you could help——'

I interrupted her. 'My dear Miss Barna, certainly I needn't tell you that you can't believe everything you hear—and you certainly can't repeat it in public places!'

She realised that she had made a *faux pas* and was covered in confusion.

'My guess is,' I went on, 'that you have been working too hard. I think that nothing would do you so much good as a visit to the Zoological Gardens.'

'Mr. Lime!' she protested.

'In fact, I'd be delighted to offer my services as your escort to-morrow afternoon and show you the monkey house. . . .'

She was annoyed. 'Mr. Lime, really, I'm not in the mood to look at animals.'

I was insistent. 'It is my opinion, Miss Barna, that NOTHING could be more important to you right now

than a visit to the monkey house to-morrow afternoon.'

She still hadn't caught on.

'But what are you——' she was asking before I interrupted.

'The monkey house, Miss Barna, at one o'clock to-morrow. Good night.'

And so it happened that the following afternoon I arrived at the monkey house adequately armed—with a bag of peanuts. I had been informed that monkeys are very fond of peanuts, and was testing the truth of this information on a rascally little fellow with a long tail when I noticed Helene Barna coming towards me and looking every bit as lovely in daylight as she had the night before—a feat few women can accomplish.

I offered her some peanuts. She refused them, and said: 'Couldn't we talk some place quieter?'

'It's my guess, Miss Barna,' I replied, 'that conversations such as ours are better held with noise.' She smiled, and I concentrated on feeding peanuts to the monkeys.

Then she began, 'I must leave the country as soon as possible and I was told you could arrange it for me.'

I remarked that she was flattering me.

'I've tried to get a passport many times, but they've always refused,' she went on.

'On what grounds?'

'On no grounds. My applications simply go unanswered.'

'For what reason?'

'I—I don't know,' she hesitated. 'They simply ignore my requests.'

'I looked at her; she avoided my glance, and then continued: 'Very well, I'll tell you the story. My husband—(he's the reason for my being refused a passport)—is an enemy of the current régime. They would like nothing better than to get him back from Austria, where he is now, and I am being held as a lure. We've been apart for a long time now, and the last word I received from my husband is that he is planning to attempt a visit. But if he should even try to enter the country, I hate to think of the fate that awaits him. So you understand that I must get to Austria before my husband does something rash. I understand you can make the necessary arrangements for me. So there are only two questions I have to ask. Will you do it, and how much will it cost?'

There was silence for a moment. Then I said, 'You're very lovely, my dear.'

'Will you please pay attention.'

'But I am paying attention! My price to anyone else would be ten thousand gold pengoes, but for someone as charming as yourself, my price is five thousand pengoes and a kiss.'

She gasped. 'Five thousand . . .! But I couldn't possibly pay that!'

I turned my attention towards the monkeys. 'If someone were to open the gate of one of these cages,' I remarked, 'I wonder if they would stop to quibble about peanuts. Five thousand gold pengoes, Miss Barna, at the Schurplatz to-morrow midnight!'

The following evening at midnight I was at the Schurplatz. It was a bad night. A fine drizzle filled the air, and shone on the cobblestones. I watched

the square from a dark doorway. Just as the clock had struck twelve I heard footsteps.

It was Helene Barna—wearing a trench-coat, collar turned up, a dark beret, her hair glistening in the mist. I remained in the doorway as she walked past me.

I allowed her to continue on to the far side of the square, turn, and look back in my direction. A little matter of making sure she was unescorted and unfollowed. As she approached the doorway in which I stood, for the second time, I stepped out into the light of the street lamp.

Before she had time to speak, I took hold of her arm and started to walk.

‘Nothing attracts a police officer as soon as a couple standing still on a deserted street-corner,’ I remarked. She relaxed a little, and I asked whether she had brought the money.

‘It’s in the right-hand pocket of my coat.’

I began to give her my instructions. She was to arrange an engagement as a singer at a Country Club in the little village of Magyarovar. In addition to being a beautiful place, it had the additional attraction of being located near to the border.

She objected that she would never be granted a work permit. But I knew better.

‘In this case,’ I said, ‘I think it will be wise for you to apply for a work permit. Who knows, there is always a chance that you will be granted one.’

‘All right, I will.’ But she was still uncertain.

‘And now with my apologies, I’m afraid I must leave you. Don’t try to get in touch with me. I’ll get in touch with you. Good night, Miss Barna.’

'Wait,' she called. 'You have forgotten the money. I have it right here.' She slipped her hand into her pocket, and gave a gasp. 'It's gone,' she cried. 'It's gone. I had it in this pocket and now it's disappeared!'

I smiled. 'No, Miss Barna, not disappeared. Just in good hands now. Good night!'

Now a business such as mine can lead one in strange paths, and my path the next morning led me to the Budapest Police Department. Or more specifically to the office of a certain police lieutenant, now at work at his desk.

After the door had closed and the formalities were over, I took one of his cigarettes, leaned back in my chair and said to him: 'I would like you to arrange a work permit for a lady of my acquaintance.'

He jumped up in anger. 'Now see here, Lime, you're going too far asking favours for your girl friends!' He crossed to the window, and then continued with his back towards me: 'I'm not at all satisfied with the way that our arrangement has been working out. Our understanding was quite plain and simple. I agreed to let you carry on your dirty little operation of sneaking frightened devils across the border, provided you notified me whenever anyone of importance tried to leave the country. You know this is the only way I could allow you to play your game with the small fry.' He turned round and eyed me coldly. 'It's six months now since you delivered anyone of consequence to me and I'm beginning to wonder about the whole arrangement.'

I put my feet up on his polished mahogany desk.

It seemed to anger him. I smiled, and then casually remarked, 'The lady's name happens to be Helene Barna.'

His attitude changed instantly. 'Just what we need! The inspector has been making my life miserable, and this should keep him quiet for a while.' He thought for a moment, and then said, almost to himself, 'So Helene Barna is trying to leave the country.'

'I've made no arrangements,' I said. 'I assumed it wasn't necessary. You've always spared me the trouble in cases such as this.'

He went back to his seat at the desk and sat there silently. Then he said: 'No, this case is different. I want Helene Barna caught in the act of trying to cross the border. An example must be made.'

Now this wasn't part of our agreement at all. I don't mind doing what I must in order to stay in business, but even I draw the line at leading the victim to the guillotine and holding her head—especially such a beautiful head—while the knife falls.

But he was adamant. If our arrangement was to continue, he must have a major public arrest.

'I don't like it,' I said.

His tone was grim. 'I didn't ask you what you liked. We can arrange it so that you will be absolutely safe. You can leave the girl at the border just before my men close in on her.'

I sighed my assent. 'And the work permit?' I asked.

'Miss Barna will be in Magyarovar by to-morrow night,' was his reply.

Several nights later, I drove to Magyarovar to see

Helene Barna. It would have been simpler, no doubt, to have gone by railway, but experience told me that the car would be valuable before the evening was out. I arrived at the Country Club shortly after nine o'clock. She was just concluding a number, but she saw me as soon as I entered, and hurried over to me.

I told her that all the arrangements had been made. We would drive to a certain place near the frontier where the wire of the barrier had been cut. The frontier itself lay a short distance beyond, at the beginning of the forest.

'Go directly to the ladies' room,' I told her, 'and, when you are alone in there, climb out through the back window——'

'Climb through the——?'

'I hate to sound melodramatic. It's the only way through. If we walked through the front door the management would have the entire Police Department down on us before we got a hundred feet.'

'What then?' she asked.

'I will be waiting behind the building with my car,' I replied.

I watched her go. She was obviously afraid, but still she had courage. I waited until she had crossed the room and gone into the corridor that led to the ladies' room, and then I turned and went out through the front door towards my car. A soft voice called my name in the darkness. It was the police lieutenant. His voice sounded worried.

'The girl has ruined everything.'

'How?'

'Before she approached you, she had been dickered for some time with Czerna.'

‘Czerna?’

‘She came only to you when his price was too high,’ he went on. ‘When Czerna learned that she had made a deal with you, he wanted his revenge. He went direct to the inspector and told him everything. And now the inspector is in town and wants an arrest made for certain.’

I pointed out that there didn’t seem to be much of a problem. An arrest was planned in any case.

His reply didn’t please me. There was a note of malicious humour in his voice as he said: ‘There’s no problem for me, but there may be for you. The inspector wants a double arrest—both the girl and you.’

I said that in that case the attempt was called off.

‘Oh, no, you don’t leave me in that fix,’ he said. ‘If no attempt is made to-night, the inspector will know just where the weak link is, and then we’re both in the soup.’

I thought for a moment. What he had said was quite true, so I agreed that the girl would attempt to cross the border that night. It seemed the only way out. But I would only take her through the barbed wire, at the barrier. She would go on alone. It was up to the lieutenant to see that the arrest was made in the forest near the frontier itself.

He protested, but I stood firm. ‘This is the only way. And after all, Helene Barna is quite a big catch. If I happen to escape in the darkness, who’s to blame? Your neck is safe. The inspector has his little triumph and I . . . well, as somebody once said, “He who runs away will live to fight another day!!”’

‘But I don’t like it!’

'I didn't say you would like it, but you'll have to accept it. And now, Lieutenant, if you'll excuse me, I have an appointment to keep.'

It is the unforeseen contingencies that are the most difficult. Who could have known that a distraught young lady, anxious to leave the country, had first approached my rivals, and that in revenge they had gone to our mutual enemy—the police? However, hesitation in my line of work can be fatal. I proceeded as if nothing had happened, and met the girl at the rear of the Country Club.

After driving down a back road in my car, we soon came to the barbed wire—the last barrier before the frontier. My accomplices had done their work; the wire was cut. We waited in silence, and then, when a cloud temporarily obscured the moon, we slipped out of the car.

Half-way through the wire, she stopped.

'What is it?' I whispered.

'I'm caught.'

'Your dress?'

Involuntarily she gasped with pain. 'No, my arm,' she replied. 'A barb has caught in the flesh.'

'Don't scream, don't move. I'll get it out. Clench your fist.' I worked feverishly with the entanglement. 'Now open it . . . hold on . . . I'll have it in another moment . . . don't scream . . . There! It's out!'

She sobbed with relief.

'You're very brave,' I said. 'That must have hurt.'

Five minutes later we were in the clear, with the forest looming ahead in the darkness. As I passed her a flask of brandy—I found from experience that my customers usually appreciated it at that point—

a night owl screeched in the darkness. I felt Helene shudder. Then I said:

'The border lies one hundred metres across that field and immediately inside the forest. You've shown a good deal of courage and I wish you the best of good fortune. Perhaps some day we'll meet again. But now I must say good-bye.'

She protested.

'There are no further obstacles ahead,' I pointed out.

'But you can't go now. You agreed to take me across the border.'

I used my most persuasive manner. 'This is no time for technicalities,' I said. 'You are substantially at the border, Miss Barna, and I must turn back. It will take me some time to get through the wire again and the Border Patrol and I are not on the best of terms.'

'I am afraid I will have to be firm.'

I smiled, but the smile faded when I saw that she was grasping a small automatic pistol. Her face was pale in the moonlight, but I could see that her hand was firm.

'Bringing this gun was an afterthought, but I'm glad I did it. You'll keep your promise or I won't hesitate to use it.'

We both stood silent, and I could hear the gun being cocked. Again there was a silence for an instant. Then I made up my mind.

'There's something I didn't tell you,' I said slowly. 'The patrol I spoke of is waiting for you directly ahead.'

'What?'

I went on deliberately. 'You approached Czerna before you came to me, didn't you?'

She gasped.

'Mr. Czerna is a very greedy man,' I continued. 'He was very reluctant to lose your account to me. He went directly to the inspector of police.'

'I don't believe it.'

'How else would I know?'

The question was unanswerable. Her mouth quivered with fright. Then I said sharply: 'There they are now.'

Her head had not been turned for a second when my fingers were on the gun. It was out of her hand immediately. For a moment I thought that she was going to fly at me with her bare hands. But as I backed away, her mask of toughness broke, and she sobbed, 'It was nothing but a trick. A trick!'

I had to stop her crying. 'It happens that this is not a trick,' I said with all the earnestness I could muster in my tone. 'I told you the truth because I had to. You'll have to get to the border as best you can—alone. Austria is directly ahead to the west. Czechoslovakia is in that direction—north. You have your choice. I would guess the patrol to be in that clump of trees, somewhere over there. . . .'

She was quieter now.

I went on: 'And now, Miss Barna, I regret that our association ends on such an unpleasant note, but I . . . wait! Come to think of it, it needn't end on such an unpleasant note at all. I just remembered, I haven't been paid in full.'

'What?' she asked, through her tears.

'My price for this service was 5,000 gold pengoes

and a kiss. The pengoes you were kind enough to give me. I have yet to receive the kiss.'

I moved towards her. 'A bargain is a bargain, Miss Barna!'

At that moment I heard a rustling in the undergrowth. It was the patrol.

'Don't move or they'll know where we are,' I whispered. 'Stand perfectly still. I have your gun. I'll hide behind that boulder. You cry out for me to attract their attention. When their attention is on you, I'll come out and cover them.'

She hesitated. 'They want me even more than they want you,' I said urgently.

Her voice was firm when she replied. 'All right, but if this is another trick, Harry Lime, so help me, I'll see that it's your last!'

When I was in the shadow of the boulder, I gave her the signal. For a moment there was dead silence. Then:

'Harry Lime! Lime! Come back!'

Her voice rang out loud and clear on the night air. Immediately there was a babel of excited voices.

'It's a woman,' one cried. Another said, 'Keep her covered.' It was the inspector. He stepped up to Helene. 'Well, well, the famous and lovely Helene Barna!' He smiled, and then added sharply, 'Where is Harry Lime?'

She was crying, but managed to get out, 'I don't know. I don't know.'

The inspector pointed. 'You two men. Quickly! In that direction!' As they ran off into the darkness, I counted those left. There were four—the inspector, the lieutenant, and two privates. Too many.

The inspector resolved the difficulty. 'You two, follow the wire in the other direction! He can't have gone far!'

He fretted with impatience. Then, very softly, I said: 'Did you call me, Inspector?'

'Lime!'

'Don't turn around, Inspector. Yes, this is a gun you feel in your back. One move, Lieutenant, and you'll have a dead inspector on your hands.'

There was silence while I motioned to Helenè to collect their guns. She did so. Then I said: 'Quick, Helene, head for the Austrian border before the other men return.'

'Hadn't you better come with me?'

I explained that the Austrian police thought no more highly of me than did the inspector.

She was uncertain. Then she said, 'Well . . . all right . . . I'll go. But here's the rest of my bargain. The kiss I promised.'

Her breath was fragrant and her lips were soft and cool.

As her footsteps faded into the darkness I heard her voice saying, 'Thank you, Harry, and good-bye!'

With difficulty, I turned my attention to business. My car was on the other side of the wire and of no further use to me, so I offered to sell it to the inspector and lieutenant for all their ready cash. They refused, but I insisted. I knew I would need the money in Czechoslovakia, so I used the gun in the small of the inspector's back to press the deal home. Needless to say, he soon agreed.

I took their wallets and discovered that though it could scarcely be called a seller's market, nonetheless

I would no longer be completely penniless over the frontier.

Then I said: 'One more request. Please give me your trouser belts.'

The inspector thought I had gone crazy, but the lieutenant asked, 'What kind of madness is this?'

'I am sure a scholar like yourself is well aware that in all the famous chases of history, no policeman has ever been known to catch a fugitive and hold up his trousers at the same time. Your belts, please; or both of you will be dead very quickly.'

They handed over their belts in silence. 'Just one more favour,' I said as I began to move towards the frontier. 'When you return to Budapest, would you be so kind as to notify the city tax collector that the company of Harry Lime, Ltd., Exporters and Importers, has gone out of business as of this date? Good night, Inspector. . . .'

I got to Czechoslovakia with nothing worse than a little attack of poison ivy.

Sometimes, on dark, still nights, I think of Helene Barna and that sweet kiss she gave me despite my callous treatment of her. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if we ever met up again. I really did like her.

But I must be honest with myself—she's not for me. She has too many things against her. She's poor, married, and honest—and an honest woman is not a joy to Harry Lime.

THE HAND OF GLORY

by

Jonquil Anthony

Were you ever in such a hurry that you didn't even know that you had been hit by a rubber bullet? I found myself in that situation once, making my escape down a side alley in Paris. And I was hit all right, hit for the sake of a chunk of gold. But where the gold was by then I didn't know, and I didn't care.

ALL I WANTED was to lay low somewhere. And that is how it happened that I found myself in one of those sleepy English villages where cows chew the cud all day and nothing ever happens . . . or so I thought.

Do you believe in witchcraft? I didn't—till then. It takes a lot to convince me of anything, and in this case it needed the death of two people in that sleepy English village to prove me wrong.

When I got away from that side alley in Paris, all I wanted to do was to get away from gold—and away from France. On the cross-channel steamer all I cared for was being quiet, very, very quiet.

I guess I looked just like any other bum. I was pretty seedy, and my arm was in a sling. I was feeling kind of faint, too, and then . . . then I felt someone touch my arm, and I saw a girl; a girl with wide

grey eyes and dark lashes that spiked over her cheeks.

'Excuse me, I've been watching you. Are you all right.' Her voice matched her appearance: she was perfection, I thought, and I've seen a good many beautiful women.

I replied that I felt fine, but my appearance belied the answer.

She was persistent. 'It's so calm to-day, you can't be seasick. Is your arm painful? I see you've got it in a sling.' There was a pause, during which I gave her no encouragement, but she went on: 'Are you sure that there is nothing I can get for you?'

When I replied that I was all right, she asked me whether I was in pain with my arm.

'It's not too good,' I replied. 'But I'll be O.K. Don't you worry about me.'

'Well, do at least sit down on one of these chairs. And let me find a steward and order you a drink—or some tea? Please, let me do *something* for you. You really look all in.'

I don't know how it was, but I felt better for her being around, and after a bit we were sitting there talking, side by side. It seemed we'd known each other for years. I told her how I'd got to go to England on business, how the negotiations connected with it, combined with a motor-car accident, had made me kind of exhausted.

She was all sympathy. What I needed, she said, was complete rest. The village where she lived would be ideal for my purposes: it was a sleepy and quiet hamlet, where nothing ever happened.

'It sounds as if it'd just suit me,' I sighed.

She immediately invited me to come and stay with her and her uncles. I remarked that they might not like a stranger barging in on them.

'Oh, they love strangers,' she cried. 'And nothing surprises Uncle John and Uncle Gregory. It's you who'd be surprised.'

I raised my eyebrows.

She laughed. 'Well . . . they're a little odd: a couple of old dears, but a bit eccentric.'

She went on to tell me about her village. It was all apple blossom and nightingales. The three of them live on the hill in an old house which her uncles had bought when they retired.

'They were scientists,' she explained, 'and now they spend all their time in a laboratory they've built at the top of the house. All day they go up there, and at night, too.'

'It must be pretty dull for you.'

She smiled wistfully. 'Yes . . . I get very lonely sometimes.'

'Do you? What's your name? You haven't told me that, you know.'

'Helen . . . Helen Carew,' she answered.

I said that it was a pretty name . . . to suit a pretty face.'

She blushed at the compliment. Then she said, 'Thank you. Then you'll come and stay?'

'All right, I'll come.'

It was half a joke, but she gave me the address and told me to turn up whenever I liked. She seemed a bit struck on me, and I found it flattering.

A week or two later I fetched up at that little

village. Fallowdene, it was called, and it lay in the heart of the Fen country.

When I got to the station there was a message from Helen saying that the car had broken down and that she'd be along in a quarter of an hour. So I whiled away the time by going into the 'local' for a pint. The place was empty, and the landlord and I got talking.

I made the usual remarks about the natural beauties of the village, but the landlord was of a pessimistic outlook. The place didn't bring luck to anyone, he said. Both he and his wife were fed up with it.

He buried his mouth in his tankard and then elaborated his complaints. 'Visitors don't come 'ere no more, sir, and the crops rot. Cattle all ail, pigs get sick, an' a man's discouraged afore 'e's begun.'

'Sounds pretty queer to me,' I remarked.

'Ah,' he affirmed, 'an' I can tell you summat even queerer.'

I motioned him to refill our tankards. When this was done, he leaned across the bar counter. 'It's the children . . . every now an' then one of 'em begins to go . . . pining away, that's all you can call it. A child gets hollow-cheeked an' pale, an' in a couple of months it's all over—and no one can tell why!'

I didn't take too much notice of the landlord, and when I saw Helen standing in the doorway in a cool summer frock with the sunshine behind her, I quite forgot all he'd said. She drove me back along the green lanes until we came to the house. And there under a cedar tree on the lawn were the two old uncles. They had got on their panama hats, and tea was set out on a silver tray on a table in front of them.

We were introduced. 'Everyone calls my uncles Mr. Gregory and Mr. John, so you must do the same,' said Helen.

When I had been given my tea, Mr. Gregory said, 'Strangers are very welcome here, sir, very welcome. Sometimes we go for weeks, months, perhaps, without a stranger coming here.'

'And never yet two strangers,' echoed Uncle John. 'Helen told us how you'd met on the ship. We said she should ask you here straight away.'

'Helen said you wanted to get away from life.'

'That's what she said—to get away from life. Well, stay as long as you wish, young man, as long as you wish.'

'You're too kind,' I was saying when Gregory interrupted me. 'Not kind at all. . . . Now, if you will excuse us, we have some work to do. We don't allow more than half an hour for tea each day.'

We leaned back in our chairs when they had gone. The afternoon was perfect for lazing. I said that I had not realised that they still worked.

'They're going to the laboratory,' Helen explained. 'I told you how they spend all their time in it. No one ever goes into it but them.'

'Are they both scientists.'

'Yes. They're twins, you see, and have always done everything together. And now they've a kind of obsession. I think I should explain about it.'

She sipped her tea, and then said, 'It's about gold.'

I remembered that I'd come there to get away from just that same commodity.

Helen explained that they were trying to find out

how to make gold, that they were determined to find out the secret of how to make it, before they died.

She laid her hand on my sleeve. 'I expect they'll start talking about gold to-night at dinner, so now that I've told you—if they do—you'll be ready to talk about it, won't you?'

'Of course, don't worry,' I answered her.

You see, I'm always ready to talk about gold.

At dinner that night, as Helen had prophesied, I learned their story from their own lips. It was an old story: alchemy, the search for the philosopher's stone that would transmute base metals into noble ones.

'It's never been done yet, even in a small way?' I asked.

John answered, 'It will be done. We shall do it. If not we, those who come after us. We are leaving our great fortune to the foundation.'

John took up the explanation again: 'The foundation of a college for young scientists, for research into the making of gold.'

Later, after we had moved into the sitting-room for our coffee, I remarked that their search was awfully intriguing, that I'd like to know more.

'Who would not like to know more?' asked John.

I pressed him. 'And *no one* has ever found the secret?'

Gregory answered, 'It will be known, when my brother and I have the power to know all.'

'Well, old man, when you *get* the power, let me know!' I called after him, as they went slowly up the stairs to their laboratory.

They were an odd couple, those two old gentlemen with their velvet smoking jackets. After dinner each night they'd go off to their laboratory, and Helen and I were left on our own. I felt sorry for her; she seemed wistful, and those big grey eyes of hers really melted me. But sometimes I had an idea that she was sizing me up. She used to get me to talk about my business affairs, and in a couple of weeks I'd built up quite a big office and a whole firm around myself. I got to know everyone in it, down to the lowest clerks.

That was all very well, but what interested me was the laboratory and the search for gold. One night, after I'd heard the uncles going off to bed, I decided to have a look at things for myself.

I crept into the laboratory through a window that separated it from the upstairs landing. It was an airless summer night: behind me I could hear a nightingale singing in the garden.

As soon as my eyes accustomed themselves to the semi-darkness, I looked around. There was a strange jumble of globes and bottles—bottles filled with bright, clear liquids; one was red, like blood; there were little crucibles and jars, all labelled; and, by the light of a torch, I saw that there were books around the walls.

My beam roved around the room. Sulphur . . . mercury . . . nitric acid. . . . Queer! Here's a crystal . . . and this phial's labelled 'Pigeon's Blood'. . . . What can they want that for . . . mandragora? There's a little figure made of wax . . . so they need *that* for making gold?'

I began to wonder; I began to think. I looked at

the wax figure and I saw that it was the figure of a child. Then gradually I knew it wasn't only alchemy the old men practised in that laboratory—it was witchcraft. The landlord had said that crops failed, animals grew sick, and children died. I reached for one of the books, opened it at random, and began to read.

I read quickly, skipping from sentence to sentence. 'Make an image in his name, when you would hurt or kill, of virgin wax . . . the person whose death you desire . . . to make the Hand of Glory, let the hand of a murdered stranger be cut from him, and the hair of a stranger that is hanged placed within it as a wick. Let it burn through the night, and you shall have power to know all!'

If ever the hair rose on my head, it did at that moment. And not only because of what I read. I had also heard a sound: a laugh. But I knew no one was in the room. No one had opened the door. Then I looked again, and saw the old man, Gregory Carew.

I explained that I had seen a window open and had come in to shut it. When in here I had got interested in the books.

He looked over my shoulder at the book I was still holding. 'The Hand of Glory, yes,' he said. 'A hanged man and a murdered man. One would be fortunate to obtain both the articles required simultaneously.'

'Most fortunate,' I replied.

'One would have to be willing to wait a long time . . . stranger.'

There was a long silence. He finally broke it by saying, 'And now we will close up the laboratory and

go back each to our own room. Let me thank you again for your solicitude. I will show you down the staircase to your room . . . stranger.'

He came behind me in the darkness, moving softly. The hair was still rising on my head as we went down those stairs, and along the corridor. But at my door he said good night politely, and without another word he left me. I sat in my room for a long time, thinking.

But in the morning, in the light of day, I laughed at myself. I'd had a nightmare: I'd scared myself over a dream. But all the same, I didn't particularly care for it when the old man still called me 'stranger'.

All next day I thought about Gregory Carew and his brother. In my heart I knew that it wasn't a dream; and I knew that they were mad, stark staring mad. Obviously they would stop at nothing in their search for the secret of making gold.

Something warned me to get away—but then there was Helen. I couldn't leave her. So I told her I wanted her to come away with me. She said she'd do it, and we decided to go next day. I'd no idea where I'd take her, but I couldn't leave without her.

That afternoon I saw the uncles walking up the drive. Someone was with them—a tramp, an old, tattered-looking figure who hobbled along between them. They came near, and I stayed hidden behind the arbour.

They stopped just in front of where I was standing. The tramp, who was obviously on his last legs, was sent to the kitchen to get a hot meal. After that, they told him he might spend the night in the attic. The old ragamuffin was profuse in his thanks.

He went hobbling up the path towards the kitchen, and I felt there was some good in Helen's uncles after all. They'd been really solicitous towards the tramp, really pleased to give him a bed for the night. They *were* pleased: I could see that by their faces.

They came and sat on the other side of the arbour.

'We've waited a long time,' one said.

'But now we need wait no longer. Two strangers—under the same roof.'

'To-night?' asked the first. The other apparently nodded his agreement, for the speaker went on: 'He'll sleep in the attic. We'll give him a drug and he'll sleep very soundly.'

'We'll hang him before midnight.'

'The other shall be first. A knife in his back. First the stranger, then the tramp. It will be easy to explain when the police come.'

'Yes, the tramp murdered the stranger, and hanged himself out of remorse.'

I began to creep away, but I just caught the words: 'The Hand of Glory at last; so simple, so easy, and for us—the power to know all.'

So I'd found out the role for which I was being cast. Very nice!

My first idea was to fetch the police and have the old men put away. But it didn't happen to suit me to go to the police just at that moment, so I thought I'd work out things in my own way.

That night I didn't go to bed. I hid behind the curtains of the big window in my room. Outside, the nightingale was still singing, and the moon shone brightly.

I waited; and just before midnight the handle of my door began to turn.

John spoke in a whisper: 'Have you the knife?'

'I have it here,' Gregory answered.

There was a pause; the only sound was that of breathing. Then:

'Have you done it?'

Suddenly Gregory's voice broke the silence:

'The bed is empty! The stranger has gone!'

'Gone?'

Their voices were rising to shouts.

'You have betrayed us,' cried Gregory.

'Liar! liar! It is you have hidden him for your own ends.'

'You'd take the gold from me—your own brother. Where is the stranger?' His voice was hysterical.

Both began shouting at once. I caught isolated sentences, here and there, as I leaned back, flat against the window.

'Liar!'

'Let me go, Gregory, or I'll raise the house!'

'You will not.'

There was a sound of furniture being knocked over.

'Give me the knife.'

'No.'

'Give it me.'

'No! You shall pay—for—what—you have done.' His breath came in spurts. 'Take that, and that—and *that*.'

A scream, a groan, and the sudden silence. I heard the nightingale continue its song.

It had all happened very quickly. John Carew lay

on the floor in the moonlight, in a pool of blood. His brother Gregory was gone.

But where was the tramp? I rushed up the stairs, and found him peacefully asleep. Gregory Carew was nowhere to be seen. I ran back, roused the servants, and led them to the laboratory.

With difficulty we broke down the door. In a far, dim corner, something swung backwards and forwards from a beam. We went up to the thing that hung there . . . Gregory Carew!

A murdered man, and a hanged man. The brothers had got their wish all right—the things they wanted for the Hand of Glory.

The police came, and in deference to Helen there was as little fuss as possible. The facts were too obvious. I stayed a day or two, wondering what I ought to do about her, but she solved the problem herself.

Uncle Gregory, it appeared, had made a new will just before he died. He had left everything to her. That meant she would be rich, very rich. I asked her when we would be leaving.

‘I’m not leaving now. I’m staying here,’ she replied. ‘I don’t need your money now I’ve got my own.’

So *she* had been using me, too. And of the four of us, she was the only one to get the gold, after all!

THE HYACINTH PATROL

by

Virginia Cooke

The Panama Canal Zone is a poisonous place . . . perhaps that's why I like it . . . for in spite of war-time improvements and sanitation, I sensed an air of fetid decay overhanging the place; and the moist brilliant jungle and swamps lie constantly in wait for men and ships like great treacherous beasts. On this particular trip, the air was even more than usually filled with the danger and tension. Why? I decided to lay over for a night or two in Christobal and find out . . . I found an air-cooled hotel and then sought out the most popular bar in town—a bistro by the charming name of 'Ptomaine Joe's'.

INSIDE, THE AIR was hot, sticky, and pulsing with the baser human emotions. Tourists and men in uniform jammed the tiny tables, tinier dance floor, and bar, in various stages of perspiration and alcoholism. But since I needed something tall, cool, and with a decided flavour of rum, I decided to take my life in my hands and push my way to the bar.

I was getting near my goal when the argument between two service men began to get beyond the stage where words are effective. A great red-headed monster of a sergeant took a swing at his buddy, who

avoided it most professionally: but the blow didn't fail to connect with somebody. Who? Your old friend Harry, of course, took it straight on the point of the jaw.

I must say that no one could have been more apologetic. Inside of two minutes he had me at a table and had bought me a rum and swiggle while he, in turn, was making short work of a bottle of beer. He asked me my name, and I was giving him one of my famous evasive answers, when he started talking about himself:

'Me . . . I'm Tiger Dolan. Ever heard of me two-three years back?'

'Dolan?' I mused, sipping my concoction, 'I don't believe . . .'

He was clearly disappointed: 'Most promisin' young middle-weight in th' fight game—that's what they called me. I was all set fer a try at th' championship when Uncle Sammy called th' decision.'

Things began to get a bit clearer. 'Oh . . . you're a *boxer*. I don't follow . . .'

He interrupted me. 'Kept up training in th' Army, of course . . . have had a few bouts. . . . I'm in better shape than ever . . . just wait'll this tea party's over, pal . . . and th' sports writers will be hailin' Tiger Dolan champion.'

We made incursions into our drinks, and I watched over the rim of my glass. 'You know, Tiger,' I finally said, 'you'd better do something about that red hair of yours.'

'Whaddya mean?'

'It gets you into too much trouble.'

He gave a sheepish grin: 'I get it. I used to keep

my fightin' fer th' ring, but since Hero shoved me into th' Hyacinth Patrol . . .'

'Who . . . shoved you into *what*,' I asked.

'Th' Hyacinth Patrol . . . an' Hero is th' louse sittin' over at that corner table with my gal Lola.'

I took a look, and looking at Lola was like looking into the face of the jungle itself. She was lush, magnificent . . . and waiting. Her eyes were insolent, her mouth voluptuously curving and cruel, her hair the dark red of ageing blood. She met my gaze . . . slowly smiled . . . and then . . . Tiger brought me back with a jolt.

'Hey . . . ain't you listenin' to me?'

'Er . . . for a louse . . . as you term him . . . your lieutenant is well featured.'

Tiger was bitter: 'Handsome if you like lizards! I was doing all right with Lola until he moved in. That guy's fouled me up since boot camp.' He took a long swig at his beer, and then went on. 'I almost busted for joy when they transferred me to Panama . . . studied and worked like mad . . . looked like I was goin' to make one of th' gun crews. . . . Then Lieutenant Nugent was transferred here—to *my* outfit! He details me to th' Hyacinth Patrol.'

'Just what is this Hyacinth Patrol that raises your gorge?' I queried.

'It's a stinkin' flower detail, that's what it is! Clearing water hyacinths outa th' channels so's they won't foul up ships or breed malarial mosquitoes.'

I couldn't help smiling. Any more incongruous occupation for Tiger Dolan would be hard to imagine. I looked across at Lola and smiled at her. She

returned the courtesy with interest. Lieutenant Nugent caught our pleasant interchange, frowned, and, after a few words with Lola, called the proprietor—Joe—over to their table.

What he said couldn't have been intended for our advantage, for when I tried to order another round of drinks, we were politely told that the joint would like things better if we took our custom elsewhere. Tiger reacted to this as might have been expected, and we left the hard way—tossed into the street . . . on our . . . well, from one extreme to another!

Three hours and eight bars later, I was ready to call it a night. By now, Tiger Dolan and I were bosom friends and had arranged to meet on the morrow. Looking forward to a shower and peaceful slumber, I let myself into my room, switched on the light and electric fan, and . . . there was Lola.

She wanted to apologise for our over hasty exit . . . so she said. She also wanted to know what Tiger had told me about her. I said that we had been discussing the flora of the Canal Zone.

'Flora?' she asked.

'Water hyacinths to you.'

'That's why he was glaring at Ross Nugent. He's never forgiven him for that detail.'

'That . . . among other things,' I said. She didn't appear to be anxious to leave, so I tried to use a little persuasion: 'Good night, Lola,' I said, and moved towards the door.

She got up reluctantly. 'Well . . . if you want it that way . . . want to see me to-morrow?'

'Where?'

'At my place . . . 23 Villana . . . when?'

'Darkish . . . about eight?'

'Good . . . I'll be waiting . . .'

There was more promise in her smile and eyes than in any heaven ever conceived by man, but I have long since learned that such paradise can hold more torment than that other warmish place conceived by man and lorded over by the Prince of darkness. I escorted Lola to the door . . . opened it . . . and . . . there was Tiger!

Was Lola put out? Not she. She merely wished me sweet dreams and went on her way. But Tiger's simple mind was perplexed in the extreme. However, I managed to convince him of my honest intentions towards his erstwhile girl friend, and suggested that the hour was getting a little late for social calls. Tiger, however, had news to give me and wasn't going to budge until he had told me all.

'Harry, you gotta listen. I think Nugent's workin' for th' enemy.'

This was too much for me. I tried to persuade him that his health might improve if he exercised more care in his choice of liquors. But he was earnest: 'I'm not kiddin',' he pleaded, 'a friend of mine just told me. . . . She came into town from th' swamps to tell me. . . .'

I was amused at this. '*She*. And I thought you were grieving over Lola! Why, Tiger, you old rascal!'

'Will you listen? Rita lives near th' old French Channel . . . an' she's seen our spit-an'-polish lieutenant goin' to an ol' cabin there, owned by a fellow by th' name of Gibber. How do you like that?'

'Not too well,' I yawned. 'Tell me about it to-morrow, Tiger.'

'To-morrow's too late. That's why I'm tellin' you now! I want you to go there with me first thing in th' mornin'.'

This was too much. 'My dear Tiger, you've already inveigled me into several predicaments, the like of which I usually try to avoid. And now you want me to take a hike in the swamps?'

But he was insistent, and I finally gave in: 'If I say yes, will you leave me alone?'

'Until six a.m.'

So we left it at that until the next morning.

I've never been partial to swamps—they've always seemed damp dismal places where all sorts of poisonous insects are flying about. This one proved I'd under-estimated their unattractiveness as, in the dingy hours of dawn, Tiger laboriously rowed us through something that was half mud, half glue . . . and the rest, those cursed water-hyacinths.

After what seemed an age we came to a small dock, and the whole tedious journey seemed worth while. For there was Rita. And as Lola had been all jungle, this small Panamanian girl with glowing black eyes and fawn-like grace, was whatever loveliness that a dawn in the swamplands could hold. She had the quality of . . . how shall I say it . . . of just being hatched from some Neanderthal egg, blossoming from an age of ooze and monsters into a new young world. For a moment, as I looked into her young grave face, I felt as young as she . . .

She led us up a path that oozed under my feet, and

into the shack that sheltered her. It was bare, spotlessly clean and forlorn. But hyacinths bloomed in a milk bottle on the wooden table. It was the gracious touch . . . Rita's touch.

She explained that she lived there alone with her father: her mother was dead. She had met Tiger one day when he was up there on patrol duty, and occasionally went into Cristobal to meet him. Before that she would never have noticed anything odd about an officer like Lieutenant Nugent visiting Gibber.

I asked who Gibber was.

'He has lived in the swamps as long as I can remember. I grew up knowing that Gibber was not quite right in the head . . . we have a saying here, Mr. Lime . . . such people as Gibber have too much swamp water in their bodies and it reaches their brains. It is bad.'

I said that there were liquids other than swamp water that were bad for the brain.

She ignored the interruption and went on: 'Usually such people are kind, like children, but Gibber never was. He was always alone. Never had a friend, not even a dog . . . until Lieutenant Nugent.'

I thought over her story as Tiger rowed me back to civilisation. It was fantastically authentic. Certainly Nugent's visits to an obscure swamp half-wit were highly suspicious. Up to this time I'd made no profit financially, but *had* collected numerous jolts and bruises. I felt that I should be remunerated for the same.

Accordingly I went to 23 Villano that evening for my rendezvous with Lola, and to ask a few questions:

but as I stepped up on the porch, I happened to glance through the bamboo screening. There, silhouetted against the light from a single lamp, were Nugent and Lola. I ducked into the bushes and did a little evesdropping.

Nugent's voice was cold and hard: 'It's none of your business where I'm going to-night. Does that answer it?'

'Definitely,' Lola spat out. 'You're going up to the old French Channel again, to see your old pal . . . Gibber.'

'Shut up.'

'But you're not only seeing Gibber, are you?' She gave a humourless laugh. 'Any old time Ross Nugent would waste his time in a swamp with an old man, when there's a pretty girl near by . . .'

'Lola.' Nugent's voice held menace in its tone.

'Don't try to fool me, lover boy . . . you're just as interested in that Rita girl as you are in Gibber. Stay away from her or I might tell what I know and . . .'

There was the sharp sound of a face being slapped, a quick gasp and then the sound of tears.

'No, Ross . . . I won't say anything . . . I promise. I only said I would because I'm so crazy jealous over you. . . . Believe me, darlin', please believe me. . . .'

This was all I needed. I sensed a deal in the making, but before going after the business, I picked up my automatic at my hotel. Then I started in the direction of the old French Channel. I had obtained directions how to reach Gibber's cabin . . . but I made the mistake of using Rita's cabin as a landmark. I thought I saw her flitting in the shadows as I passed near the place and then familiar voices sounded. It

was Tiger and Rita. They asked me where I was going, and I had no choice but to tell them.

Tiger was reproachful. 'Gibber's . . . without me,' he asked.

'I thought it best, Tiger,' I excused myself. 'It might not be good for you to get involved. I have nothing to lose.'

He said that he wouldn't miss it for anything; Rita wanted to come along as well, but Tiger stopped her with: 'No, Rita, you've got a job to do, in case we don't come back within two hours.'

'What's all this?' I asked.

'Just in case of trouble, Harry,' he replied, 'not that I'm expecting any . . . but just in case.'

Tiger's presence changed my plans. I couldn't make any sort of deal with the sergeant around . . . but there was nothing I could do about it at the moment. We made the trek to Gibber's in virtual silence. The shack looked like something a lunatic would enjoy, broken down and festooned with moss. We peered at it from the edge of the clearing in which it stood, while the swamp made hungry sucking noises in the distance. And then, eerily and strangely, a voice spoke over our shoulders: 'Lookin' fer swamp spirits, folks?'

It was Gibber.

'We're friends, Gibber,' I said when I had recovered my breath, 'and we've come to talk to you.'

'Night ain't fer talkin' friend,' he croaked, 'too many spirits be about. You come back after sun-up, then I'll talk to you.'

Suddenly a torch flashed into our faces. A voice

said: 'All right, Gibber, you can bring them in now.' It was Nugent.

It appeared as if the hunters had walked into their own trap. Our guns were removed by Gibber, while Nugent kept us covered with an automatic. Then Nugent spoke for the second time.

'You're Harry Lime, eh? I've made it my business to learn your background.'

I tried to turn on the old Lime charm, and suggested that I might prove helpful to him. Tiger gave a gasp of disbelief, and Nugent turned to him. 'You don't know who you tied up with, Dolan. Lime has more crimes to his credit than I'll ever have!'

'But they all pale beside your chosen profession, Nugent,' I intervened.

Nugent motioned to Gibber, and we were taken inside the shack. There, with an automatic pistol pointing straight at my stomach, I tried to make a deal.

'Tiger gave me the lead,' I said. 'I intended coming here alone to-night to make you a proposition for our mutual benefit.'

Dolan made an angry movement, but was restrained by Gibber. Nugent ignored him.

'It won't work, Lime,' he said. 'This isn't another confidence game. We only use blue chips in this one. The highest stakes are life . . . and death.'

'I'm not interested in anything but the highest stakes.'

'I don't need you,' he replied. 'You would be dangerous. You and Dolan will be liquidated to-night.'

This looked bad. 'Just what are your plans,' I asked.

He smiled. 'Dolan is on the Hyacinth Patrol. I thought I'd drop you and he into the channel so that you could observe their root formations at close range. Go and fetch the weights, Gibber.'

The Lime luck was running out. I'd gotten into this confounded predicament through no apparent fault of my own, and had undergone experiences that only a rank amateur would suffer. And now I was going to die because of it. The two-hour limit that we'd given to Rita was no good: we'd be counting hyacinth roots long before she summoned whatever aid Tiger had dreamed up. I idly wondered if my past life would march before me as I sank beneath the swamp scum.

Nugent was watching us. Presently he broke the silence. 'Knowing as much as you do, you may be interested in this?' He moved a partition in the shack's wall, and a small cubby hole was revealed. In it was a radio set, with an operator hard at work.

'Yes, it's all very efficient, Lime,' he commented. 'At the moment the operator is sending a message to our carrier miles out at sea, alerting the robot planes to bomb the Gatun dam.'

I listened to the chattering of the telegraph key as it talked to the carrier. Meanwhile Gibber came back to report that the weights were ready in the boat. I was beginning to sweat, and had almost made up my mind to try and make a break for it, when Nugent said: 'You gentlemen will excuse me if I don't go down to the boat with you? . . . I have business here.'

Gibber and the others will see to it that you get a good launching.'

Tiger blurted out in futile fury, 'If there's any justice anywhere, you'd drop dead right here, Nugent.'

At that moment the radio set started to make a wailing note. Nugent drew himself up tensely. 'The warning note,' he muttered.

Then it all happened at once. I was under the table, and Tiger was at the door. The lights went off. Nugent's automatic fired at the shadows. Then the door flew open and a voice cried: 'We're here, Sergeant Dolan.'

It was the Hyacinth Patrol, and they gathered more than blossoms that night. Nugent and the other enemy agents were rounded up. The whole canal zone was alerted for attack, the enemy carrier was found and destroyed, and all this because little Rita went for aid the moment we started for Gibber's cabin.

Three days later I was back in 'Ptomaine Joe's' with Tiger. He was apologetic, 'I . . . I can't tell you how sorry I am . . . thinkin' what I did about you, Harry . . .'

'Forget it, Tiger,' I replied, 'after all, how were you to know that I was trying to play for time.'

'The brass hats buttered you up plenty, huh,' he chuckled.

'Yes. Most embarrassing. As a rule the authorities have anything but nice words for me.'

Tiger told me that they had created a Hyacinth patrol of the air, and that he had been made a gun crew on one of them. And then he asked me to be

best man at his wedding to Rita. This was too much for me. I excused myself as politely as I could, and booked a passage on the next boat out.

Tiger's request was a sentimental degradation that I could not stomach. Yet as my ship made its way through the locks, I seemed to hear the strains of Lohengrin. Then a formation of low-flying planes bearing gigantic hyacinths painted on their sides buzzed our ship—Tiger Dolan's last salute. . . . I raised my hand. . . .

Good heavens, do you think that there's a trace of sentimentality in me after all . . . ?

HORSEPLAY

by

Peter Lyon

If I were an honest man, which I am not, this would be my sermon: 'the man who is swindled is asking for it'. You can't swindle a man unless he's so full of larceny that, when he hiccoughs the breath that comes up is dishonest. This would be disconcerting to a man of my talents if I didn't know that nine people out of ten are full of larceny.

SUCH A ONE was an American named Harris, who came to Paris for a holiday not long ago. Strictly in his honour I concocted a juicy little swindle called 'Horseplay'.

My game of Horseplay began in the bar of the Crillon, and to start it, I had to call on a French pal of mine, Andre Janin. I pointed out a big man, sitting at a corner table: it was Harris. All Janin had to do was to get into conversation with him, and then, by the merest chance, to discover a wallet lying under the table. Harris and Janin would then trace the wallet to its rightful owner—me.

'And all this is to establish what?' asked Janin.

'All this, my friend,' I said as I got up to leave the field clear for him, 'will result in Mr. Harris giving me thousands and thousands of American dollars. As you will see.'

Andre Janin did his job smoothly. He was sitting

down and talking to Harris in a matter of minutes, as though they were old friends. From not too near, I watched discreetly. Everything went according to plan. Just as they were getting up to go, they discovered the wallet.

Who did it belong to? The only way to find out was to look inside: thirteen ten-mille notes—(about four hundred American dollars)—a membership card to the Club de Turf, some sort of code jotted on a piece of paper, two race tickets, and a newspaper cutting that said that a mysterious race-track plunger by name of Harry Lime had made over a million dollars at Belmont that season.

Another five minutes passed and they were at the door of my suite.

‘Are you newspapermen?’ I said brusquely. ‘If you are, I don’t want to see you. No interviews!’

They explained what they had come for. I was full of apologies, and invited them in. Would they accept a reward? Of course they would not.

‘Well then, at the very least, you must both be my guests for an evening while you are here in Paris: drinks, dinner, a round of the hottest spots, maybe some girl friends, eh?’ I said as I ushered them into chairs. When they were settled I continued: ‘Meanwhile let me place a bet for you, just to cover your hotel bill while you are in town.’

At first they didn’t catch on, so I explained that I represented a large syndicate that ‘regulated’ the winnings of races at French tracks. My instructions arrived by coded telegram, the cipher of which had been in my wallet. Consequently I was most grateful to them for returning it.

The light began to dawn on Harris. 'You mean, the bets you place—the races have been fixed in advance,' he asked.

I smiled at him understandingly. 'Well, now, "fixed" is a very unpleasant word! But that's about the size of it. That's why it occurred to me that perhaps I could show my gratitude by placing a small bet for both of you, which would at least make you some cigarette money while you're here in Paris.'

I was interrupted by a page-boy at the door with a cablegram. I returned in a few minutes and said that I would have to go out, and place a bet. A cable had just brought me the day's instructions.

'We did not mean to stay as long as this . . .' Janin was saying when I interrupted him.

'No, no, please. Not at all. I insist you stay here. Here are drinks and cigars. I'll be back in a matter of fifteen minutes at the most. Make yourselves at home, both of you.'

'Put something on for us,' Harris was calling out jocularly as I shut the door.

So I left this man Harris in my room with Janin. He sat there thinking of the possibility that he'd make some money on a sure thing—a fixed horse-race—with no risk whatever to his own pocket-book.

What's wrong with that? Probably, like Harris, you might have felt you didn't *know*, for *sure*, that I wasn't some kind of nut. But at least you would have had to have admitted that I kept good whisky, good cigars, and rented a comfortable suite. And in twenty minutes or so I'd have been back with a big smile on my face.

Of course the horse had won. I paid them both eighty thousand francs.

Harris was delighted. 'Well, say, what do you know!' he exclaimed.

'My goodness, sir! Thank you!' Janin muttered as he pocketed the bills.

'Just like it grows on trees!'

Yessir, Mr. Harris, just like it grows on trees. Eighty thousand francs—about two hundred dollars—and you never lifted a finger. That's living, man!

In fact, as he said himself over a final whisky: 'Just think, Janin, the only limit is the capital you've got to put down on a race!'

How about that? You see what I mean about nine out of ten being larcenous?

And, of course, before the afternoon is over, another cablegram was delivered, and another bet successfully placed.

At this stage, Harris had some three hundred thousand francs of my money in his pocket, but I didn't need to worry too much. He wouldn't run away. He was too anxious to get some more of this money that just grows on trees.

Overnight, I left him in the company of my friend Janin, and went to prepare the appearance of the Club de Turf. Of course, it was a phony—staffed by my pals, and all set up just to separate Mr. Harris from some of his American dollars. All I needed was a set of rooms, a few comfortable chairs, a bar, a blackboard for the odds, a dozen telephones, desks where bets may be laid, and a horse-race betting-room had come into existence. Well, not exactly a horse-race betting-room. Rather the Club de Turf!

The next day they both came back to my suite. I said that I was delighted to see them. When they had both been given drinks, I continued: 'Yes, sir, I'm glad to see you. I need someone I can trust, and after the way you two returned my wallet yesterday, I know you're both dependable.'

'Well, anything I can do . . .' offered Harris.

'You can do me a favour. And pick yourself a little change at the same time. Here's my problem. The manager over at the Club de Turf is getting suspicious of me, I'm afraid. He's just been telling me I'll have to place my bets somewhere else.'

Harris gave a nervous laugh. 'Well, I don't wonder.'

'Now, if you two will take this guest card,' I went on, 'it will get you into the Club and you can place a bet for me. I've got a horse in the fifth race. I'll give you a blank cheque.'

'On credit. *My* credit, of course. Besides, you still have the few hundred thousand you won yesterday.'

On my instructions, Harris gave his three hundred thousand to Janin, which made the total six hundred thousand in cash. Then I went on:

'This is very important. Do exactly as I tell you, Janin. When the time comes to bet, you make out and sign this cheque for fifteen million francs.'

Harris whistled in astonishment.

'Don't let these figures unsettle you, Harris. It just sounds a lot of money. Translated, it means only fifty thousand American dollars. Place the cheque, together with your cash, on Dancing Cloud in the fourth race at Chantilly. The odds should be about four to one. That should net us about . . . well, more than two hundred thousand American dollars.'

'What a way to make money,' exclaimed Harris.

Janin, however, was more cautious. 'I don't have fifteen million francs in cash,' he said. 'And I don't like the idea of putting my name to a cheque for fifteen millions.'

I reassured him. 'Your guest card assures you credit. And when you win, you take back the cheque. Where's the trouble?'

He asked what would happen if we lost.

Harris laughed. 'Don't be a dope, Janin! You can't lose! It's a sure thing!'

That Harris. It was a pleasure swindling him. The smarter the sucker, the quicker he'll tumble. And now it was up to Janin to guide him to the Club de Turf.

Even though I say it myself, the Club de Turf really looked the part. A cashier stood behind a wicket-window paying out huge bundles of francs on pretended bets to the pretended club members. The whole fancy front certainly impressed Harris, whose breath came faster and whose eyes were shining brighter; for he was about to make a huge profit on a sure, crooked wager.

I watched what happened from a concealed hiding-place. The pair of them went up to the cashier, presented the cheque and the cash, and placed it on Dancing Cloud. For a horrible moment, Harris thought that the bet was not going to be accepted, but after the clerk had examined their guest card, they were issued with their ticket for a bet of fifteen million, six hundred thousand francs.

They went down and sat in their chairs. Janin kept saying to Harris that he was worried about putting his name to such a big cheque. Harris tried to

reassure him, but I could see that his palms were sweating.

Well, to cut a long story short, Dancing Cloud won the race. Janin sighed with relief, and Harris pretended that he had been certain of the result the whole time. Then they went over to the window and presented their ticket. The cashier started to count out a large bundle of notes. Just as he was pushing the money over towards them, the manager came up.

‘One moment, please, gentlemen,’ he said.

They turned around towards him.

He went on: ‘I’m the manager here, gentlemen. Would you mind telling me how you got here? This is a private club.’

Janin was flustered. ‘I have my card right here,’ he finally said.

The manager looked at it. ‘Did you take this gentleman’s cheque?’ he asked the cashier.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Well, you’ve won this bet,’ he said to them. ‘The money is yours. We’ll put this cheque through the bank, and if they approve it you’ll be paid off. We’ll impound your winnings right here. When the bank reports back, you’ll get them.’

Janin was red with embarrassment. ‘I . . . I’d prefer that you did not bank this cheque immediately,’ he stuttered.

‘What’s that?’

‘I . . . I’ll have the cash deposited in a local bank very soon, in a matter of days, and you can clear it through. But—right—now—I’m a little embarrassed for funds in my own bank.’

The manager was severe. ‘Then you shouldn’t have

written that cheque. It's illegal, monsieur.' There was a pause while he considered the position. Then he said: 'It's most irregular, but I'll tell you what I'll do. You must either deposit the fifteen million francs in our bank, or bring it here to the Club within the week. That will show you could have paid the bet, if you had lost. Good day, gentlemen.'

Poor Harris! How his face fell to see all that money—real money—right in front of him, and to be reaching out to take it, and to be stopped.

So a very disappointed man came back to the hotel with Janin to talk it over with me. We had to raise fifteen million francs within a week. We discussed the ways and means.

Janin said he could manage three and a half million. I looked at Harris. 'Could you raise the other eleven and a half million—about thirty-seven thousand American dollars?' I asked.

'I've been thinking about it, Lime, on the way over. Most of my money back in the States is tied up in real estate. Far as I figure it, I can't raise more than twenty-eight thousand, in a hurry. That leaves us stuck for nine thousand.'

It was my turn to be generous. 'Well, I hope my principals don't get to hear about it,' I said, 'but I guess I can get hold of the other nine thousand until this thing is cleared up. It shouldn't take long.'

They both sighed with relief.

Before they went I managed to get a word with Harris alone. I told him that I didn't think that Janin was too trustworthy, and would appreciate it if he, Harris, would keep an eye on him for me. In fact, it might even be wiser if he moved into Janin's hotel.

Of course, my reason for this was to make Janin's job of keeping Harris from talking to the wrong people easier. The next day or so is so crucial in these matters. Until Harris's cash would be cabled from the States, I had to be sure that he was kept on ice. Twenty-eight thousand dollars! It's worth all that time and effort.

Three days later his money arrived. We went to the Club de Turf together, Janin carrying the fifteen million francs. As we got to the Club, I looked up from decoding a cablegram, handed to me as we left the hotel.

'Mal de Mer, in the third race,' I said *sotto voce*. The two of them went to the cashier, and collected their winnings—a bundle of seventy-eight million francs. I got back from checking up the odds on the next race, just as the bundle was being pushed across the counter.

'Mal de Mer is three to one,' I remarked.

There was a pause. Then I suggested: 'Why don't we place it all on Mal de Mer.' At that moment a bell sounded, and I moved off to watch the marker. They moved back to the betting window. Soon they rejoined me with their ticket. Harris laughed shakily. 'Great heavens! It will mean a win of half a million dollars for me.'

Janin said, 'I hope nothing goes wrong. Here's the ticket, Lime.'

I looked at it. Then I exploded. 'Good Lord, man, yet bet the horse to win! I said place! That horse will run second!'

'Oh, my God!' exclaimed Harris.

'Oh, you dumb ox, Janin!' I went on more loudly.

'My nine thousand dollars! I ought to thrash you. . . .'

The manager came up. 'Gentlemen, please . . .' he said.

I flew at Janin. A crowd began to collect. Harris moaned: 'He's ruined me, too.'

'Take your hands off me!' Janin cried, as I grabbed him by the collar. Then, as I stepped back and put my hand in my pocket, he yelled in terror: 'No! No! . . . Lime . . . don't . . .'

There was a shot. Janin fell to the ground, and I grasped Harris's arm. 'Quick, we've got to get out of here,' I whispered.

He was stunned. 'You shot him!'

'Come quick, the police . . .' I was saying as we pushed through the dumbfounded crowd.

Of course, as we left my specially rigged club, as we left Janin sprawled in a welter of blood, Harris was stark, sheer one hundred per cent terrified. But don't *you* worry. This was all just fun for the kiddies—just horseplay.

The bullets I fired were blanks. The blood all over Janin's shirt front was chicken blood, spurting out of a punctured bladder. And we had Harris's twenty-eight thousand American dollars, hadn't we?

So our only problem was to terrify him into leaving town without peeping to the police. And that wasn't hard to do. All I did was to point out that he was an accomplice in the eyes of the law, and asked him whether he had an Italian visa.

Half an hour later he was on the train to Rome.

I sat back, sipping a highball, and mentally spending my lion's share of his twenty-eight thousand

dollars. My expenses were certainly no more than eight thousand. What a wonderful Horseplay it had been to be sure.

Janin interrupted my musings. I welcomed him like a long lost brother. But he was in no mood for a reunion. 'The cops,' he wailed, 'they raided the Club. Right after you left. Seized all the cash they could lay their hands on, arrested Louis, and Berton and Rene, and the whole crowd.'

'What!'

'It's the truth. See here . . . all I could grab before I beat it.' He showed me a bundle of crumpled notes.

'How much?' I hardly dared to ask.

'Our original stake, Harry . . . and a small profit.

'How much profit?'

'Two mille franc notes, Harry. One apiece.'

So we netted just two dollars and fifty cents.

But I enjoyed it, and it was one of the most successful failures I've ever had. There's a sunny side to it, too: I am still at liberty, and not in prison. And I'm not at all depressed, for I know that this lovely world is full of Jack Harrises. And I know that I will meet another very shortly.

Until then, if you're going to spend money on horses, be sure that they're on the merry-go-round where the most that you can lose is the brass ring!

WORK OF ART

by

Bud Lesser

Buenos Aires, July 1944, and the Argentinian papers were full of the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler. The town was full of those who had once been high in Nazi councils and they had brought with them money, jewellery, and art treasures. Now, more than ever, the cosmopolitan city was alive with gaiety. In the lavish night-clubs one saw dazzling displays of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. Everywhere one turned there were reassuring signs of wealth spilling out of careless hands. That was why I had come to South America.

YES, I WAS there in Buenos Aires: just a clean-cut young American boy looking for a chance to make a dishonest living.

A friend had given me a letter to Señor Juan Ferendez, a gentleman with a handsome face, impeccable manners, and no morals. My informant had indicated that the señor might be helpful in guiding me along my chosen path. But when I called at his art galleries, he refused to see me.

Well, there were always other sources of income to be found without Señor Ferendez's help, and the bar at the Casa del Oro seemed an ideal place for a young man to start a career.

The bartender offered me a 'speciality of the house', but I refused, and ordered my usual absinthe.

'You make a mistake in ordering absinthe where rum is the popular beverage,' said a man on the stool beside mine.

'What? Why?' I grunted.

He went on: 'And your clothing. You should buy clothes in the stores of Buenos Aires as soon as possible.'

'Miss Emily Post, I presume,' I said sarcastically.

He laughed. 'No, my name is Ferendez. And I do not make these suggestions for the sake of etiquette, Mr. Lime, but for the sake of business.'

We moved to a little table in the corner, where our conversation could not be overheard. He explained that I had been injudicious to come to his art galleries. The business in the front rooms was regular, but the transactions in the back rooms was a bit less orthodox. It was important that his front-room clients should not meet his back-room friends. We must remain casual acquaintances, meeting in bars, not business associates.

'You're not giving me your full attention,' he said suddenly.

'How could I?' I replied. 'Did you just see what came through the door?'

He smiled. 'The beautiful señorita with the off-the-shoulder dress?'

I remarked that he didn't miss much. He acknowledged the compliment. Then I asked him if he knew who she was.

'If you and I come to terms, señor,' he answered, 'she is your first assignment.'

Señor Ferendez was about as communicative as a penguin. With a display of the ultimate in old-world manners, he refused to say another word about the slender, dark-eyed beauty who had suddenly set my pulse pounding.

Instead, he turned the conversation to other types of beauty—those found in paintings and sculpture. He began to test my knowledge of the arts, and also, perhaps, my conversational abilities. Apparently, my proficiency in the latter made up for any deficiencies in the former, for we soon came to 'terms'.

It wasn't until a second meeting, however, that the exact particulars of my new trade were explained by the master. We had met 'accidentally' at a roadside refreshment stand near the suburb of Belgano.

He told me that many of the newcomers to Buenos Aires had a great deal of money, but that a large portion of it was in jewellery, art treasures, antiques, and the like. He wished me to make friends with the new residents, get invitations to their homes, and go through their private galleries.

'That sounds interesting,' I said. 'I might even get a job later as a tourists' guide.'

He laughed politely. Then he went on to explain that my job would be to guide some of his 'friends' to the finest, most expensive works of art in town. I would have to equip them with full descriptions of the galleries, the servants, the entrances and the exits. So I was to be the 'finger'. He was to be the 'fence'.

I asked him how much I was to get for doing him this service; he replied that my share would be twenty-five per cent. Those who took the greatest

risk would get fifty per cent. He and I would divide the balance equally.

So far, so good. I agreed to his terms after a few moments' thought. 'And now to that first assignment you spoke about—the señorita.'

Little was known of Señorita Melissa Corday. She had come to Buenos Aires a few months ago, rented an expensive villa, and only a few close friends had seen her art treasures. But according to reports she was the owner of the most valuable painting in the town—an original Rubens, that was worth a fortune.

'Even if she was the owner of a mere Cezanne, I wouldn't mind getting friendly with her,' I said as we got up from our table.

My job seemed to be ideal. I wasn't going to be doing any of the actual stealing: nothing could happen to *me*. My job merely consisted of being charming . . . and observant.

During the next few weeks I managed to exercise my charm on half a dozen of the local gentry. I was invited to their homes; I made polite compliments to my hosts and extravagant ones to my hostesses. You know, it's amazing how much information you can get, if you say the proper things about a woman's choice of dresses or a man's choice of wines.

Señor Ferendez paid me handsomely for my information, but both of us were still primarily concerned with Señorita Melissa Corday, and she proved as elusive as the olive at the bottom of a Martini. However, by this time we were *both* members of Buenos Aires society, and an eventual meeting was inevitable.

As a matter of fact I managed to meet her often.

Unfortunately—and unusually—she found me quite easily resistible. My invitations for lunch, for dinner, for cocktails, for dancing—every one of them was turned down.

But I was determined to succeed. Two things were driving me towards Melissa Corday: my determination that I would pierce that core of cold steel, and my desire to get the Rubens. Eventually my patience was rewarded. One Saturday evening, Señorita Corday was giving a large dinner-party for a visiting American diplomat. I wouldn't say that I 'gate-crashed' the party, but I did manage to arrive at it together with one of the guests—an Under-Secretary of the British Consulate, whom I had been cultivating for the past week—in circumstances that made an invitation inevitable . . . though unwilling.

One's hide has to be tough in my line of business, and, after a few minutes' awkward silence, Melissa invited me in to join the party.

Would I have a drink, she asked.

'I don't think so,' I replied. 'I don't want to chance dulling my senses. I understand you have an art collection that is really worth while seeing.'

She looked at me with surprise. 'You're interested in art? Somehow I didn't think you would be.'

'I'm very interested.'

'Perhaps I've been wrong in my estimate of you, Mr. Lime.' She hesitated for a moment, and then added. 'I'll be glad to show you my gallery, after dinner, if you really think you'd enjoy it.'

'Honestly, Miss Corday, nothing could fascinate me more!' The small talk was so small, that it was almost non-existent, but for one thing I could be thankful—

my pal, the Under-Secretary, had forgotten me in his absorption with a moustached Peruvian woman. He was probably fascinated by the task of counting her chins—no mean job, since she was constantly quivering with laughter.

At any rate, dinner was over in what seemed like a mere a few months, and after a 'decent interval', I persuaded Melissa Corday to take me on a Cook's tour of her gallery.

For a time we walked round in comparative silence. Then I spotted the painting.

'A Rubens!' I exclaimed. 'That is a Rubens, isn't it?'

'Yes,' she answered sadly. 'When I first got it I thought it was the answer to all my dreams.'

'And isn't it now?'

'It's almost worthless.'

My hand brushed hers, as I turned to look into her eyes. 'Melissa, you can make things worthwhile again. You can learn how to dream again.'

There was a silence, then she said softly: 'Please, Harry, you're hurting my hand.'

'And you're hurting my heart! Melissa, I don't know what's holding you back, but sometimes when we've been hurt, we build a wall around ourselves. I know, because I've been hurt, I've been lonely. Maybe neither of us has to be lonely again.'

I laid my hands gently on her beautiful shoulders. My lips had barely touched hers when she drew back.

'I . . . I think I'd better go back to my other guests. Look around the gallery, Harry. Take your time, have your fill of it. When you're ready to rejoin the others, just pull the door firmly. It's self-locking.'

And I was alone with the Rubens.

I looked about me. The gallery was in a separate wing of the house—connected to a small sitting-room—with only the self-locking door between. The sitting-room had a large french door that led to a small balcony. And the street was only seven or eight feet below. On the other side of the sitting-room was a boudoir—Melissa's. The servant's quarters must be miles away.

It was a 'set-up', and Harry Lime wasn't going to give this set-up away for any twenty-five per cent of the Rubens' value. Let Ferendez take *his* twenty-five per cent. It was going to be seventy-five for me.

I wedged a match in the lock, and then I rejoined the gay party of doddering diplomats. As soon as possible, I made my farewells and went into the hallway.

There I got into conversation with the doorman, a character rejoicing in the name of Pedro. I showed him one of the buttons on my jacket that had worked loose. Would he do the great favour of bringing me a needle, thread, and razor blade?

In a few moments he was back and offering to undertake the repairs. I hated to keep troubling him, but somehow I had become unbearably thirsty. Would he fetch me a glass of water?

'But certainly, Señor,' he said as he went off.

This was the one dangerous element of the whole scheme—my being seen now. I waited until the obliging Pedro was out of sight, and then slipped down the corridor. I hoped that he wouldn't start a fuss when he found me gone.

The guests and servants were all busy, and I reached the gallery wing undetected. I slipped

through the little sitting-room, and into the room containing my Rubens. I took the little matchstick out, and heard the lock click reassuringly. But just in case someone should come in, I took up a position behind a heavy velvet curtain.

Hours later I heard the other guests taking their departure. Then the servants locked the doors and windows. Someone rattled the door-knob of the gallery and then went away. I heard Melissa's door open and close, but I still remained motionless.

I waited until almost dawn, until the silence was thick and heavy.

Stealthily I approached the priceless painting. I took the razor, slit the canvas neatly from the frame, rolled it up, and slipped it into the lining of my coat. A few hurried stitches took care of the rip I'd made for it.

I held my breath as I tiptoed to the door and opened it gently. Then I crossed to the french window that led to the balcony. Below was the street, and safety. The latch worked easily, and I started to turn the handle.

The silence was shattered by a burglar alarm!

Feverishly I pushed at the door. The woodwork splintered, and I crashed out on to the balcony. In a matter of moments, I was over the ledge and dropping into the street.

I landed hard on my ankle, and rolled on to the pavement in pain. Then, gritting my teeth, I staggered to my feet.

'Halt or we shoot!' a voice cried from the house.

Escape was impossible. The most that I could do was to hobble a few yards.

Five minutes later I was in Melissa's room. She motioned the servants to the door. Then she said:

'Well, Harry?'

I explained that I had come there to steal something—a few hours alone with her.

She laughed, and I thought I could detect relief.

I went straight on: -

'I pretended to leave, so I wouldn't embarrass you by being the last guest here; and then I stole into your little sitting-room. . . . You didn't turn the lights on when you came through. . . .'

'No,' she said.

'I sat down in that comfortable sofa to wait for you. You wouldn't talk to me earlier; and I had so much to tell you—things I couldn't say before the other guests.'

I could see that she was weakening.

I smiled wryly, and continued: 'Well, I guess I did a silly thing and fell asleep. I didn't wake up until a few minutes ago, and then . . . well, it was almost dawn, and I felt a complete fool. I tried to sneak out, and you know the rest.'

'Oh, poor Harry. Your ankle hurts you very much?'

'When you look at me like that, I can't feel any pain.'

She didn't answer, so I said: 'Can I phone for a cab?'

'I'll send you home in my car,' she offered. 'Pedro can take you.'

It was probably some sort of innovation—a thief being given chauffeur service by his . . . 'victim'. Pedro drove me to my hotel, and I picked up a few

things there and then slipped out of the back door. It wouldn't be too long before the theft was discovered and the police would be looking for me.

The thing to do was to deliver the painting to Ferendez, get my money, and skip out of the country. But it was Sunday, and I couldn't find Señor Juan Ferendez any place!

I spent the day skulking in doorways, running from shadows, hiding in deserted spots along the waterfront near Puerto Nuevo. I caught fitful snatches of sleep in the shelter of the deserted Parque del Retiro.

Monday morning came, and with it the newspapers—probably carrying my description! But to my surprise there was no mention of the robbery. For some reason Melissa Corday had *not* reported the theft. Maybe the old Lime charm had been more successful than I'd thought.

Still, I wasn't taking any chances. I made my way most carefully to the galleries of Señor Ferendez. And this time I insisted on seeing him.

'The Rubens!' he exclaimed while he was examining it at the window. I said: 'I need the money right away, Juan. I have to get out of the country now.'

He was absorbed in his examination.

'And I want seventy-five per cent this time. Of course, I know you haven't got that much cash hanging around . . .'

'I have enough to pay you what this is worth,' he said slowly, turning round.

I didn't get it.

'This is not an original Rubens, Harry. It's a copy, a very good copy—worth a hundred dollars, perhaps.'

So that was what she had meant when she said, 'It's almost worthless.' And I had been worried about her morale.

It's an old game—insuring a fake, *permitting* someone to steal it, giving him ample time to make a getaway, and then suddenly discovering the loss and reporting it to the insurance company.

The Insurance Company! Their investigators would be after me—and for a hundred-dollar copy. And she was in the clear. If I was caught, she didn't dream it was a fake. If I made a getaway, she was rich.

Ferendez interrupted my musings: 'I have a friend. He owns a small freighter which sails in a few hours. I'll call him.'

I explained I might not be able to afford the fare.

He pulled out his wallet: 'Here, a hundred dollars for the Rubens' copy, though I don't know what I can do with it. The skipper is a friend of mine. He won't charge you more than a hundred dollars.'

And as I sailed away that night, Melissa Corday and Juan Ferendez sipped their cocktails together.

'I don't know how I can ever thank you, Señor Ferendez,' said Melissa. 'You were my only chance. I had to come to you.'

'It was a great pleasure to save your masterpiece for you.'

'That wasn't all you saved,' she continued. 'If I'd called the police, there would have been no way of explaining the presence of an attractive man in my home at that hour. I could never have obtained my divorce. My whole reason for being in Buenos Aires would have been shattered: my months of being rude

to every man who looked at me, lest my husband's agents should misinterpret my friendships.'

They drank in silence. Then Juan said, 'You know I'm beginning to think I was never cut out for this business. We Spaniards are too sentimental. Like Harry Lime, I might have made a fortune out of this painting. . . .'

She laughed. 'Imagine buying it from him for a hundred dollars.'

'But with no profit to me. All I accomplished was the saving of a woman's reputation—a perishable commodity at best.'

Of course, I didn't witness that last scene. I reconstructed it later from a few newspaper clippings. One reported the final divorce of Melissa Corday; another told of her marriage to Señor Juan Ferendez.

And a third, which must have been released to the press in anticipation of my reading it somewhere, told how a priceless work of art had been recovered for a hundred-dollar reward!

Oh, it had been a work of art all right. Everything she had done—right from the beginning.

ROGUE'S HOLIDAY

by

Peter Lyon

Did I ever tell you about the time when I outwitted three suspicious Wall Street investors, at a net profit to me of fifty-five thousand American dollars? Well . . . but on second thoughts that story requires too much credulity on the part of my readers. But it was because of that incident that I decided that an ocean trip would be good for my nerves and for the nerves of some half-dozen New York detectives. That is how I happened to go on a holiday—a rogue's holiday, if you will.

IT WAS VERY pleasant, a day or so out of New York, aboard the *Queen Anne*, bound for Southampton. I was on the passenger list as J. Harrington Lime. I ate, of course, at the captain's table; and, remembering how I had put the investments of those three Wall Street brokers in my own personal savings bank, whenever I was asked what business I was in I would smile to myself and answer that I was an investment banker.

At dinner the first night, I found that the chair next to mine was occupied by an English lady in her middle thirties. Her travelling companion was not down to dinner, and the chair next to her on the other side was therefore empty. We soon introduced ourselves and got into conversation.

'Yet you seem so young, to be engaged in so complex a business,' she said to me as we sipped our coffee. 'Investment banker! I always thought all bankers were portly men in their fifties. . . .'

I smiled at her. 'Every banker must be able to inspire confidence in his clients, Lady Barbara. The incompetent banker relies on his appearance and his maturity.'

'And you?'

'I rely on my record of success, ma'am.'

I smiled as I walked the deck after dinner thinking of my fifty-five thousand: and wondered if Lady Barbara Ffolliot had any investments on which I might be able to offer discreet and profitable advice. There was no harm in looking, at least, even if I was on holiday. So I made my way to the ship's library and asked for that invaluable work of reference—Debrett's. But the steward returned after searching the shelves with the news that the book had been borrowed and not yet replaced. I said I would call again in a day or two.

There was no hurry—not while I was on holiday. The *Queen Anne* is a pleasant boat, scheduled to take six days, and I had plenty of time. But the question of Lady Barbara's bank account, and the question of the empty chair that was always next to hers at the captain's table preyed on my mind.

So I looked up the passenger list. There she was, all right: 'Lady Barbara Ffolliot—Stateroom, "A" Deck.' But all it said was 'and companion'. And companion? What did that mean? Not a husband, surely? I paid a social visit to the steward who had charge of her stateroom.

She had given him ten dollars not to give out information, so it cost me twenty to get it.

'Looking for a little shipboard romance, no doubt, sir,' he suggested with a twinkle in his eye.

I thought it best not to disillusion him.

'Then you've got clear sailing, sir,' he continued, 'the companion's not her husband. Matter of fact, sir . . .'

'Yes?'

'Take my advice, sir, and wait till the companion's got her sea legs, sir. A lot cuter, the companion, than Lady Barbara, sir.'

So, in the next day or so, I found plenty of opportunities for squiring Lady Barbara around the boat—cocktails in the evening, a drink or two after dinner, or a game or two of deck tennis in the afternoon. And from a few remarks she made in conversation I began to redouble my attentions to her and begin to view her quite definitely as a prospective . . . shall I say 'client'.

One morning I ran into their steward, and he told me that both ladies were out on the promenade deck. With some caution I went looking for them. True, I was on holiday; but still, if I could turn my hand to a piece of business . . . And besides, I was curious about this mysterious companion, whose name was not even carried on the passenger list.

Turning a corner on the promenade deck, I nearly bumped into them. Quickly I ducked back, behind a bulkhead, as they passed. Had they seen me? I didn't think so.

I heard a musical voice saying, 'Et puis, alors! Que pourrai je faire?' Its owner laughed, and then went on, 'Que c'était drole, hein?'

'Tres rigolo, ma princesse . . .' was all I caught of Lady Barbara's reply as they passed out of earshot.

But I had heard enough. 'Ma Princesse.' So her companion was a princess! Oho!

For the rest I had seen that she wore a veil close over her hair and face, but no veil could conceal her beauty. And I had seen something else that interested me, too. A string of pearls—matched pearls.

I manœuvred into position for their next round of their promenade.

'Oh, good morning, Mr. Lime,' was Lady Barbara's greeting. She turned to her companion. 'Anne, this is the nice man I have told you about, who has been so kind to me. Mr. Lime, this is Miss Jones.'

I bowed to her. 'Miss Jones? Such an ordinary name for such an extraordinary young lady?'

'He makes nice speeches, Barbara, just as you said he did.' Her voice had a pleasant trace of accent.

I suggested that I might join them in their walk, but Anne said that they were just about to go in. 'Then, at least, Miss-uh-Jones, maybe you will join me and Lady Barbara this evening before dinner?'

Lady Barbara explained that I always insisted on buying her a cocktail before our evening meal.

'Why, I should like that. Only, as to cocktails, the ship's doctor has told me that perhaps, until I am stronger, I should drink champagne.'

'I will make sure that there is a bottle on ice for you,' I assured her, and went away feeling well pleased with the turn that events had taken that morning.

Miss Jones? I could spot that a mile away as an

incognito. And something else that I was pretty sure I could spot was that string of pearls. I was confident that while the name of Jones was a phony, the pearls certainly weren't. This was promising to become one of the most profitable holidays I had ever spent.

That evening, I was in the lounge early, a bucket of iced champagne at my side. Anne came in, lovely in a simple, close-fitting black silk evening gown. Her only jewellery was the rope of pearls.

She explained that Lady Barbara was a little indisposed. I said that I was not sorry.

'So?' she asked.

'I was so looking forward to meeting you,' I went on. 'You had become a lady of mystery; and having met you this morning on the promenade deck, I spent the day looking forward to chatting with you this evening.'

'More pretty speeches!'

I raised my glass, and she leaned slightly forward so that our glasses might touch. Then, with a quick, panic-stricken movement, her hand flew to her neck.

'Oh!' she gasped.

'What is it?'

'The string of my necklace . . . it broke! Oh, my pearls, they're all . . .'

'Just hold still,' I said. 'You know how many of them there were?'

'Oh, yes! There were sixty-four.'

After five minutes on our hands and knees, the steward and I had sixty-four pearls safely in an empty wine-glass on the table. Anne sighed with relief. I was looking closely at the pearls. Finally I remarked that they were a flawless set.

‘Yes, aren’t they handsome?’ she answered. ‘Mr. Lime, do me a great favour?’

‘Anything at all.’

‘You have an envelope, perhaps, or a safe pocket?’ she went on. ‘Take them for me to the little jewellery shop. You know the one? Right on this deck.’

I protested that I did not relish the idea of walking around the ship with a handful of loose pearls. Laughingly, she insisted that I should go, and I allowed myself to be persuaded.

‘I shall sit here quietly,’ she said as I rose to go, ‘just thinking how lucky I am that you were with me when the string broke, until you return. All right?’

So there I was by myself, free as the wind, with sixty-four pearls in my pocket. Every one of them, one of the bigger ones, would be worth, what? Five thousand pounds? A nice sum. In my stateroom I had some loose pearls—paste. I could have made the switch easily enough, for I had plenty of time. A stupid thief might have done just that. But not me. Not Harry Lime. I was too smart. I would wait until later, until after we were off the ship. I went straight to the ship’s jeweller.

Casually, I asked him to restring them. His eyes lit up when I poured them into his hand. ‘Very handsome, very handsome indeed,’ he muttered.

‘How much would you estimate that string to be worth?’ I asked him.

‘If you were just to walk into this shop and ask me to buy them, you mean? Or if you wanted me to find another sixty-four like them?’

'Just walk in and buy them.' I paused, and then suggested 'Fifty thousand pounds?'

He smiled with superior professional knowledge. 'This string . . . closer to one hundred and fifty thousand, sir.'

When he had finished his work, I asked him how much I owed him.

'Forget it, sir,' was his reply. 'It was a privilege to be handling pearls like that, even if only for a moment.'

It would have been foolish for me to tamper with this fortune while we were still aboard ship. In two days we would be in Southampton, after which there would still be time. The important thing was to get this lovely girl's confidence, which I most certainly did; and the second thing was to pry under her incognito.

Not until the last night, when the ship was gliding in the soft darkness past Plymouth and the two of us were standing close together on the deserted boat deck, did I find out. If she looked lovely in the moonlight, her pearls looked even lovelier. . . .

'You . . . you kiss very expertly, Mr. Lime.'

'Harry.'

'Or should I say, you seem very practised.'

'If a cat may look at a king . . .' I began, and stopped suddenly.

'Yes?' she said.

' . . . then perhaps it's all right if I kiss a princess?'

I could hear the sharp-intake of her breath.

'You recognised me?' she asked, after a few moments.

I said that I knew she was a princess, but not her name . . . if that mattered.

When she remarked that I was uncanny, I gave a little smile and moved closer to her. We both looked over the rail in silence. Then she said:

'Since you have got this far, and since you have shown yourself trustworthy, I can see no reason for not telling you more. I am Anne de Bourbon, Princess of Helwigstein. That is a principality in Eastern Germany, beyond the Iron Curtain. I should say that it was a principality. Now it is no more. All gone, except ...'

'Except what?'

'I am not sure. I will not know until I meet my husband in London.' She paused, and then added: '*If I meet my husband.*'

'If? There is some doubt?' I asked.

'I have said too much already, Harry. It is too bad. It had been a pleasant evening. I was almost able to forget for a moment. Good night.'

She was gone. Just like that. At least I knew now who she was. But whether I would be able to find her again in London; whether I had frightened her away, and with her my chance at that string of pearls, by letting her know that I knew she was a princess. All these things I was nervous about. Until, next day, just as I was getting ready to disembark, a steward brought me an envelope.

The notepaper bore a crest. It was one sheet of heavy paper, folded once. There was no salutation. The note said: 'As you said, a cat may look at a king. It might be interesting—and fun—to experiment once more with your other statement—the one about the princess.' There was no signature, but none was necessary.

I tipped the steward, who was waiting at my elbow.

He thanked me, and added: 'Madam told me to tell you, sir, that they would be stopping at the Carleton.'

So she had arranged that we would meet again, after all. And when we met again, away from the confines of an ocean liner, I proposed to have a sure-fire scheme for relieving her lovely neck of those even more attractive pearls. To be sure, I was on holiday; to be sure, sentiment was involved; but these were factors that had to be disregarded. My scheme was foolproof, but as it turned out, it wasn't needed. On my very first visit, she asked me to do her a favour. I started to say that I would do anything short of murder.

'No, nothing like that,' she interrupted. 'First, listen. On shipboard, you remember, I told you I was to meet my husband . . .'

'*"If"*, you said. . . '

'Yes. This is the "if". Years ago, Harry, when the Red Army was driving through East Germany, and we had to flee, my husband had to hide all our valuables. He hid them himself. He alone knew where they were. Then, a few weeks ago, we made plans to try and get them back. It would cost us a lot, we knew—bribes, purchase of an aeroplane, a fee for the pilot, more bribes.'

I was listening intently.

She continued: 'Klaus had to fly into Helwigstein, don't you see, himself—a mad and dangerous idea, but he refused to tell anyone else where his cache was. He couldn't trust anyone. I went to America to raise some of the funds we needed. Lady Barbara

has been good enough to lend us more. But—just to-day—I have learned that even more is needed.'

'More money?'

She rose, and crossed to the davenport where I was sitting. 'Mr. Lime, say no, quickly, if you can't do me this favour,' she pleaded. 'But I have exhausted all my other resources. If you knew how much it costs to bribe those officials, over there!'

'I'll bet. How much do you need?'

She sank down on to the seat beside me and clasped my hand in both of hers. 'Oh, you will do it? It's just a loan, mind you.'

For the second time I asked her what sum she needed. In a scared voice she asked whether ten thousand American dollars would be too much. Then, seeing that the sum did not appal me, she added:

'And see? for security . . . you will take these . . . my pearls. You have already guarded them well.'

I protested that I wouldn't dream of such a thing.

'Yes! I insist! Otherwise, I will not even ask you for the loan.'

She was adamant, and I allowed myself to be persuaded.

Five minutes later I had made a trip downstairs, returned, handed her ten bills and placed the pearls in my inside pocket. We smiled, shook hands on the deal, and I walked out of her room with a fortune.

It called for a celebration. A pal of mine runs a pub which I use as a message centre. That is to say that I have sent letters there, and get up to date on all the news I need to know in my line of business.

Over a double whisky and soda, I passed the pearls over to him. He whistled with appreciation.

'I had them priced by a jeweller,' I said, 'and he said that he would ask a hundred and fifty thousand pounds for them.'

'Let me just have a look, do you mind,' he asked.

'Look 'em over all you want to, Barney,' I replied. 'This is your last chance. I'll fence them somewhere in Paris this evening.'

He asked me where I had got them. I vaguely replied that it was some German princess.

He grunted as he screwed a jeweller's glass into his eye and I elaborated that she was French born.

He put his magnifying-glass down. 'Name of what?' he asked.

I told him. He began to chuckle.

'Tell me the joke!' I said.

'I thought these pearls looked funny, for all you said they weren't sham. . . .'

This was going too far. I protested that I had had them priced myself.

He was laughing now. 'Maybe you had *some* pearls priced, but not these, my boy. The oldest trick in the world—pulled on *you*, Harry Lime!'

'Don't try to pull your tricks on me, Barney,' I said. I was angry now.

'I don't need to. It's been pulled already. Harry, me bucko, *I* know who your Anne de Bourbon is—she's a slick little article, but she's not German and I don't think you'll find any Helwigstein on the map. She's Doris Jones, *that's* who she is and she was born right here in Clapham, and she's took you and shook you! For how much!'

'Ten thousand dollars,' I replied, as I moved to the telephone.

Of course I found that she had checked out of the Carleton. And she hadn't left a forwarding address. I came slowly back to the table.

'So all I've got is this pearl necklace,' I said.

'It's a good imitation,' he replied, 'must be worth at least fifty pounds. . . .'

I began to smile: 'So I come ahead after all.'

He looked at me for a moment, and then asked me what I meant.

It was my turn to laugh. 'Wait till your slick little article tries to pass those notes, Barney,' I said. 'They're counterfeit. That'll teach her to try hoodwinking Harry Lime.'

A TICKET TO TANGIER

by

Orson Welles

I was down on my luck—way down, scraping the bottom. A couple of deals had fallen through and I found myself in Paris with a lot of time on my hands and only the price of a beer in my pocket. I was spending my time and the beer money at Fouquets; not because the beer is any cheaper at Fouquets, but because you meet a nicer class of people there, and, besides, they let you read the newspapers free.

SO I WAS drinking beer and reading a paper when I came to the advertisement: one of those classified ads in the personal column—and it was addressed to Harry Lime. Harry Lime being me I read on with some interest.

There was no signature and no address. 'Harry Lime,' it said quite simply, 'will find a business opportunity of an extremely profitable nature in the city of Tangier.'

Now I might have thought that this was one of the boys trying to hustle me out of Paris or just trying to be funny. Except that the advertisement mentioned the city of Tangier. Why Tangier? There are few places in the world I hadn't been to, and Tangier just happens to be one of them. Also Tangier, as

everybody knows, is full of money and I couldn't imagine anybody wanting to send me there—right in the heart of the free gold area, where every second address is a bank and every second person is an international operator—just for a gag.

There are probably more chances in Tangier to grab a fast buck than you'll find in the world to-day, so I was inclined to take the ad a little seriously. Of course it might have been a police trap; there are cops in countries all over the globe busy looking for me, and some of them are just sharp enough to try to pull me in a queer corner like that. But the truth is that one of the only cities left where they don't happen to want me for what is known as 'questioning', is the port of Tangier. That's what sold me. There was just one complication: my beer was finished and with it my financial resources. My problem was how to raise the price of a ticket.

While I was brooding, my eye happened to wander down the personal column, and a little below the advertisement addressed to me was this: 'Gentleman travelling to Tangier—a visit to the desk of the porter at the Lancaster Hotel on Rue de Berg will repay any business man planning a visit to Tangier who can whistle a certain tune.'

Well, of course, that didn't have to be Harry Lime, but there is a song I am fond of, one I've been whistling for years and everybody who knew about me might know about that song. Anyway what could I lose? So I went over to the hotel and approached the concierge. He asked me what he could do for me.

'I don't quite know that you can do anything,' I

replied. 'But do you happen to read the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune*?'

He smiled. 'No, M'sieu. I prefer to follow the news in my own language, but we have copies of the paper you mention for sale.'

I decided to try a new tactic. 'Do you like to whistle,' I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. 'I am a lover of music, M'sieu, but I do not whistle. No. As a young lad, however, in the orchestra of my school I was considered quite proficient on the bassoon . . .'

'Well, try this on your bassoon,' I interrupted, and began to whistle a few bars.

He didn't let me get far. 'Ah, yes, but of course. I have something for you, Mr. Lime—here,' he said, and passed me over a thick manila envelope. I asked who it was from. But he shook his head.

'O.K., old man,' I said. 'Thanks, anyway. I wish I could give you something for your trouble, but I forgot my wallet this morning.'

'That was anticipated, M'sieu.'

I looked at him blankly.

'Everything, M'sieu, has been taken care of,' he explained.

'Everything?'

'Yes, M'sieu, that is the word, I believe—everything.'

In the envelope was an airline ticket for Tangier, 50,000 francs in nice fresh notes and the following letter:

'My dear Mr. Lime, when you arrive in Tangier go immediately to the El Mirador Hotel where a suite is reserved for you. After you have dined, go to a

cabaret called "The Caballa", wait there for instructions.'

The porter interrupted my meditations.

'Excuse me, M'sieu, but it is 2.45 and your plane leaves at 3.15.'

'Will you call me a cab?' I asked.

'No need for that, M'sieu. There is a limousine at the door.'

It was a pleasant trip with a very—a very, very pretty hostess on board. I am afraid that I was a demanding passenger and required a great deal of attention. Towards the end of the flight, I pressed the buzzer on my seat.

'Yes, Mr. Lime?'

'My name isn't Mr. Lime,' I said. 'My name is Harry. Have you ever been to a night-club in Tangier called the Caballa?'

'Why, yes, I have,' she answered.

'Yes you have what?'

She laughed. 'Yes I have, Harry.'

'Is it a nice night-club?' I asked.

She replied that it was the best in town.

'That's good. I'm glad you like it. I've reserved a table there for us. O.K.?'

There was a long pause. Then she said: 'Fasten your safety-belt. We're coming in.'

Some hours later I remarked that she was one of the few girls outside of Havana who knew anything at all about the rhumba.

'I learned it in Havana,' she said with a smile.

'That almost explains it.'

She asked me what I meant by almost.

'I don't know. O.K. you learned to dance in

Havana, but so do lots of other people. O.K. you're a hostess on an airline and you're very good-looking and there are lots of good-looking hostesses that dance the rhumba. But they don't dance that well, and they're none of them that beautiful. No, I don't know what I mean by almost—but really, you know, you're almost too good to be true.'

'I'm not so good.'

'That's good.'

After a pause she said: 'You don't even know my name.'

'Oh, yes I do. They have a sign on the door to the cockpit. It said: Captain—I. R. Stevenson. Co-Pilot—J. O'Grady. Air-Hostess—P. Smith. So that's your name, isn't it, P. Smith. May I call you P?'

'P is for Patsy.'

A few minutes later she said: 'Let's take a walk outside, it's awfully close in here.'

'I'll just pay the check.'

'Don't bother,' she said with a laugh. 'It's been taken care of.'

I pointed out that she was my guest. Besides, I was the male in the party and I had my pride.

However, she was quite firm. 'I'm sorry, Harry. It's all taken care of. Come on.'

We found a cab outside. Patsy asked the driver if he knew the Villa Moughelti.

'The Villa Moughelti? Oh, yes, Mademoiselle—you mean the great palace on the hill. I know it well.'

The cab twisted and turned its tortuous way through the native quarter, and then pretty soon we were out in the country. I noticed that we were climbing steadily and were passing beautiful villas,

the homes of rich expatriates who had come to live in this strange little international settlement where you don't even have to register with your Consulate and nobody pays any income tax at all.

I think that I neglected to mention that Patsy was beautiful, and if I did mention it, believe me I was understating the situation. She had grey eyes and that clear powdery gold hair that makes you think of the ashes of angels' wings. I've known an awful lot of girls but none of them I've ever laid eyes on could have given Patsy a worried moment. There may be better-looking aeroplane hostesses, but if there are they're working for airlines on another planet.

As we climbed on up the moon-bright hills over Tangier, I completely forgot the strange business which had brought me there, the advertisement in the paper, the airline ticket and all the rest of it. I didn't care why I'd been sent for to Tangier, and I didn't care who had done it and what he wanted from me. I didn't even know that the cab had stopped.

After a long time, Patsy moved away from me. 'I adore kissing you,' she sighed. 'You do it very well, but we've come to our destination.'

Reluctantly I diverted my attentions. Through the window of the cab I saw some sort of private mansion. I asked her whether she was sure that we'd be welcome.

'I'm certain of it,' she replied. 'Here, you take the key. You're my guest.'

'But how . . .'

'You've been my guest all along. "Gentleman travelling to Tangier—a visit to the desk of the porter at the Lancaster Hotel in Rue de Berg will

repay any business man planning a visit to Tangier who can whistle a certain tune.”—You whistled a tune, didn’t you?’

‘Yes—but how do you know about it?’

‘I had a friend once who told me how fond you’ve always been of that music . . .’

‘No, I mean about the ad in the paper,’ I interrupted.

‘I ought to know. I paid for it,’ she said softly.

‘And my plane ticket . . .’

‘I got a reduction from the airline.’

It was a huge place—full of heavy chandeliers and pompous pieces of furniture, most of which were pretty spooky-looking because they were covered with dust cloths. Obviously the place hadn’t been lived in for many months. But who was it who had lived here? Who was it had built this unlikely palace on a hill overlooking the harbour of Tangier? Above all, why had I been brought here? Just who was P. Smith, air-hostess, and what did she expect me to do about it? We made a tour of several huge chambers before I even began to get any answers. Eventually we entered a huge room, that evidently used to be a ball-room. Patsy told me to close all the curtains and then to turn on the lights. I looked around and saw a piano, about thirty gilt chairs and a big rolled-up carpet. Then Patsy said: ‘Do you know anything about heroin?’

So that was it. I thought for a moment before answering: ‘Not anything to speak of. I don’t use drugs, Miss Smith.’

‘But you sell them.’

I asked her what she was trying to suggest.

'I'm suggesting that there isn't much you don't know about breaking the law—any law.'

It was no use trying to deny that my knowledge of that particular subject wasn't fairly extensive, so I remarked that she had a point there.

'Now let's stop kidding and get down to business,' she said sharply.

I thought that it was about time I took a hand in the questioning: First of all, I think that you had better answer a few questions, Miss P. Smith—Air-Hostess.'

'That isn't necessary.'

'Maybe not, sweetheart, but I am the curious type. I like the facts before I take on a job—all of them. First of all, what's your racket?'

'I haven't any racket. I'm an airline hostess,' she said with a smile.

'Yes—because the run takes you to Tangier. Am I right?' She didn't answer but I could see that I had guessed correctly.

'We'll play it my way, or we won't play at all,' I went on. 'You must need me awful bad to take all this trouble to look me up and move me here. If you need me that much, you're going to co-operate. So we'll start off with your real name, and we'll go on from there.'

She was silent for a moment. Then she asked: 'Did you ever hear of a man called "Moughelti"?' .

Rico Moughelti! Of course that was why the name of the villa had seemed familiar. I had met him once in Marseilles and another time in Casablanca.

'I was his wife,' she went on.

'Was?' I asked.

'Yes. He's dead.'

I said that I was sorry.

'There's no need to be sorry for me. I killed Rico myself.'

I said that in that case I was sorry for Rico. But I wasn't really. Rico hadn't been a nice man. I had once seen him blind a man with a broken wine glass. Nonetheless I wasn't too keen on the way that the set-up was developing. I always tried to avoid getting mixed up in murders. For one thing they are messy, and for another thing they are silly. Lastly—and to me the most important—there's generally no profit in them.

Patsy must have guessed my thoughts, for she said: 'You don't know the facts in this case, Harry. I was justified. You'll have to take my word for that.'

'I guess I will at that. And now, Mrs. Moughelti, if you don't mind, why have you brought me all the way to Africa to this empty house?'

She pointed to the rolled-up carpet. 'There's a fortune in heroin in that rug.'

'So what?'

'You know how the drug traffic works. I don't. It was something new for Rico. Some kind of big haul—he must have had a partner because he wouldn't have known how to dispose of it. It wasn't his line at all.'

'It isn't mine either, honey. I'm sorry to have to disappoint you,' I interjected.

'I've been keeping it in this house for months now,' she went on. 'My airline job is perfect for smuggling the stuff, but I don't know who to take it to. I don't know what towns pay the best price. I don't know

the names of the agents. Rico kept me away from all that sort of thing, and all I can remember was hearing him talk about you. You've got to help me, Harry.'

'But what about the police?' I asked.

She replied that they didn't even know about the house. Tangier apparently was the only place where Rico had a clean record.

I replied that I was more interested in her. She had killed him. Perhaps the cops had ideas about that.

'They don't suspect me. There was no reason why they should. I had a good alibi. I wasn't even in town . . .'

'You must tell me how you did it,' I remarked jokingly.

'I must apologise for interrupting such an interesting conversation,' said a voice from the doorway. 'But it would be well for you both to raise your hands in the air—not too high—just shoulder-level. This is a very efficient gun I am holding and I am a very good marksman.'

Slowly I raised my hands, and turned around. A very fat man in a crumpled white suit was standing by the doorway. He smiled benignly at us both. 'You left the door open,' he explained. Then he turned to me and asked: 'Where is the heroin, Mr. Lime?'

'You seem to know my name, Monsieur, but I am afraid that you have the advantage.'

'I was—shall we say—a business associate of this widowed lady's late husband,' he explained.

'O.K., don't tell me. Let me guess. You began in Indo-China. You served three years in a penal colony

in Brazil. They used to call you "the Doctor"—am I right.'

He continued to smile. 'I have a doctor's degree.'

Suddenly I remembered: 'Dr. Bessie. That's your name.'

He remarked that I would make a very good detective.

'I have a good memory, Dr. Bessie,' I went on. 'And I happen to be a professional collector of information. You'll find the heroin in the piano.'

He thought for a moment before answering. 'In the piano?' he mused. 'This is probably a trick, Mr. Lime. Suppose you go to the piano and extract the heroin yourself.'

'Don't be silly, old man. It would be very simple for me to extract a revolver from the piano, and I think it would be very unpleasant for both of us, if there were any shooting. There must be police in the neighbourhood and I would much prefer you to find your heroin and leave quietly. I'm a peace-loving man.'

He ruminated for a few seconds. Then he began to lumber towards the piano. As he moved slowly across the room, he remarked: 'I'm keeping my eye on you, Lime.'

He reached the piano, and lifted up the lid. As he did so, Patsy spoke for the first time. 'Put your hands up, Bessie! I'm warning you. I'll shoot if you don't.' He turned around with an exclamation. A shot rang out, and he sank to the floor. Patsy was holding a smoking automatic.

I took a few moments to collect my wits. Then I said: 'Congratulations. He must have been boasting when he said he was a good shot.'

Patsy looked as calm as ever. 'He should have kept his eyes on both of us. Is he dead?'

I moved over and investigated. He was very dead. Suddenly Patsy exclaimed: 'What's that?' I listened, and in the distance I heard a sound I knew only too well. A police siren.

'Douse the lights, honey,' I said. 'We're getting out of here.' She moved over to the switch and turned the lights off. I crossed to her, and took her arm as if to guide her in the darkness. I gave a quick twist and caught the gun as it slipped out of her fingers. 'You're too impulsive for firearms, Mrs. Moughelti. I'm keeping the gun,' I told her.

'Why you . . .' she began, but it was interrupted by a knocking at the door.

'I think we'd better scram. Just two feet ahead of me, and don't try anything funny,' I went on as I propelled her towards the windows.

We made our way out through the garden. The cops were all over the place, and after a while it was clear that our only hope lay in separating. The last I saw of her was her back as she vanished into the bushes.

We both got away—by the grace of God. But they found her in the end. They took her off the plane on the return run to Paris. Somebody tipped the police off about that murder. You might call it the wages of Lime.

One thing that Patsy didn't know was that I had picked up the rug in the dark and had hidden it under a bush just outside the window. I came back later and collected it. Of course the word was out and I had no trouble in getting a good price in Marseilles

the next week. But honestly, I don't approve of drugs. That's why I threw the original stuff into the Bay of Tangier and delivered several nicely wrapped packages of confectioner's sugar.

So my conscience is clear—except for one thing. That nice little prayer rug it was wrapped in. I know it didn't belong to me, but it looks very nice in front of my tea table. And when I pour out tea I always get a good laugh. For I offer my guests the very best sugar with it. The very, very best brand of sugar, in fact.

A syndicate of desperate gangsters once paid me fifty thousand dollars for only seven packages of the very same quality.

AN OLD MOORISH CUSTOM

by

Irvan Ashkinazy

There are many people who are unlikely to forget me. Police Detective Charen of the Algiers Gendarmerie, for one. As for Mademoiselle D'Aronj—that vibrant young creature must remember me best of all, I think.

WHEN I ARRIVED in Algiers my passport—or at least the one I presented—classified me as an American wine importer on an extended holiday. It wasn't too difficult to wangle an invitation shortly afterwards to a soirée at the Governor's mansion. It was there I met my target—Mlle Valerie Orterie D'Aronj, a strikingly lovely young thing with features that were purely, classically Greek. More important, however, was the fact that she was the granddaughter of Armand D'Aronj, owner of an ancient estate some thirty-odd miles from Algiers—a place called 'Barbarossa'.

Four weeks and seven meetings later Valerie and I were dancing together at our rendezvous in the ballroom of the luxurious Granada Hotel, overlooking the Mediterranean. We were accompanied, as always, by Madame Plantage, her chaperon, and Ali, her chauffeur—a great Sudanese in a red fèz and baggy pants.

In those four weeks I had found out a lot about her family. Her aristocratic old grandfather was nominally a sheep-farmer, but on his estate, 'Barbarossa' he was in reality emperor of all he surveyed.

The place, of course, was named after his ancestor, Aronj—the greatest of the Moorish pirates. A Greek turned Muslim, his beard was red, like the blood upon his hands. It was droll that after four hundred and fifty years an ancestor who had been cursed by God and man should have become a romantic figure.

We had moved out into the veranda, and I was attempting to advance our relationship a further step.

Valerie drew back: 'No, no, *chéri*! Do not embrace me,' she cried.

'But if you love me . . .'

'Please! It will not be easy,' she interrupted.

I asked her what she meant.

'My Grandpere—the Seigneur . . . I owe him too much. . . . He and I, we are the last of the D'Aronj!'

'Yes, I know, but . . .'

She went on: 'He has plans for me—to live in Paris for a while, a term at the Sorbonne, a season in Rome, in Athens.'

'We can do all that now—on a long, wonderful honeymoon,' I interjected.

She was still doubtful.

'If I spoke to him, wouldn't he think of your happiness? And give his consent?' I asked.

'I . . . I do not know!'

'Suppose I drive up to Barbarossa to-morrow, and ask him.'

Reluctantly she consented. But she warned me:)

'My dear, do not joke with grandpere. He is most serious.'

I didn't know it at that time, but he was going to prove even more serious than either of us expected. But for the moment things were going better than I had hoped. The next day, however, would prove the final test of—shall we say—my 'salesmanship'.

And even if it failed, there were other methods. And why not? All's fair, they say, in love and war.

Yes—and in piracy.

I was making my way at a leisurely pace back to my hotel, when I heard footsteps overtaking me, and looked down at a stout, pink-cheeked little man in a baggy, alpaca suit and fuzzy fedora. He kept pace, looking up at me with glossy, inquisitive eyes.

Finally he said: 'M'sieu Lime?'

I acknowledged the compliment.

He drew a wallet from his pocket and flipped it open. The identity card beneath its plastic shield stared up at me: 'Pierre Jules Charen . . . Police Detective.'

We exchanged pleasantries for a few moments while I wondered what he wanted. Then he said:

'Just before sailing for Algiers, did you meet there one calling himself Dubois?'

I said I couldn't recall the name.

'He is one who arrived here on the same ship as yourself. The steward has said that you seemed to be acquainted with him.'

'If I did, it was with a face, not a name. You know how it is aboard ship.'

There was a pause. Then I asked who this Dubois character was.

'A bandit,' he replied. 'Only his name is not Dubois; it is Mario Marteau.'

It appeared that a British art-dealer had identified his picture as one of several bandits who had tortured and robbed him the previous week. The police thought that Marteau might, perhaps, be a lieutenant of El Sikkeena.

'Eh . . . Who?' I asked.

He smiled. 'El Sikkeena—a Bedouin outlaw. One of our local gangster leaders. If it occurs that you see Mario Marteau again . . .'

'I'll give you a ring, you can be sure,' I promised.

Charen waddled away into the gathering twilight. How many pieces of my past had he dug up. That forged passport, had he checked it with the Paris Surete? But no! He'd have picked me up for sure if he had!

Or was this one of those cat and mouse games?

When I got to my room, the door was already unlocked. So M'sieu Charen had been there!

From the doorway I could see the lamp glowing softly. Beside it stood a freshly opened bottle of champagne, a glass half full of the pale amber wine, and an Arab's *burnous* draped over the edge of the table. There was a silence—the silence of an enemy holding his breath.

A low, sardonic voice broke the silence: 'Harry,' it said.

A tall familiar figure, dressed as an Arab, stepped from behind the door, his black, curly hair glistened in the lamplight; his teeth flashed in a hard grin.

'Well, come on in, *ami*! Do not just stand there and stare,' he said.

It was Mario. He came straight to the point:

'El Sikkeena's treasury is getting low. He is getting impatient with you, Harry.'

'Impatient? What do you mean?' I asked.

'He has paid you a large sum. How long do you expect him to wait for results while you engage in dancing and making love?'

I explained that an operation like ours could not be rushed. Mademoiselle D'Aronj was not a bazaar girl to be won over in a day.

'It is not necessary to press this courtship to marriage! All we ask is that you obtain the information we desire!'

'One depends on the other,' I replied. I motioned him to sit down, and he did so with bad grace. Then I continued: 'You know, I'm inclined to think that your chief's theory is entirely correct. I mean, about old D'Aronj having a secret hoard hidden somewhere. D'Aronj lives like a prince—in a style his lands, his apparent resources could not possibly support . . .'

'Tell me something new,' Mario interrupted.

'Perhaps I will. That legend you told me in Palermo—about Aronj Barbarossa burying a billion francs' worth of gold cups and things in a cave——'

'It is no legend!'

I was inclined to agree. In fact, as I told him, I had been doing some unaccustomed research in the Government library. Aronj Barbarossa had actually captured a galleon back in 1504 which the Pope had sent from Genoa loaded with gold dust and wine for the use of the Church. He was pursued by warships and hid his loot in a cave on the coast somewhere between Algiers and Bougie.

'I am not interested in fairy tales,' he commented dryly.

'Neither am I, Mario. According to the records, the galleon Aronj captured was loaded with newly mined gold dust for the goldsmiths of Livita Vecchia! There is no mention of finished gold articles.'

He swept my remarks aside.

'All I know is what I see now. Old Armand D'Aronj has sold numerous antiques of pure gold to dealers, this past year. The Englishman we robbed had a sixteenth-century cup he bought from D'Aronj just two weeks ago.'

'Okay, okay,' I said. 'You just leave it to me. I'll find out soon enough just where the stuff is hidden.'

He got up. 'You have just twenty-four hours.'

I thought that he was kidding, but he was deadly serious.

'I did not risk coming here to joke with you, my friend. El Sikkeena has waited too long already. He wants results.'

'But twenty-four hours! That's impossible,' I protested.

'If it is impossible,' he said as he moved over towards the door, 'your services will be dispensed with—permanently.'

There was a long pause. Then he added, 'I am sure you understand?'

'Old man, you're as subtle as an avalanche!' I replied laughingly. But I knew I was in a spot.

The sun was high when I woke the next morning. I dressed carefully, hired an expensive limousine and drove out from Algiers towards the ancient estate of

Barbarossa. There was much to be done—and only twenty-four hours in which to do it.

Twenty-four hours . . . I had that much time according to El Sikkeena to make a legend come true! To locate the treasure of a Barbary corsair, dead and gone these four hundred years!

A large stone wall marked the border of the estate. A pair of white-robed guards, armed with rifles, swung open the marxo wooden gate; and shortly afterwards I pulled up before the villa of Seigneur Armand D'Aronj.

Valerie must have told the servants of my projected visit, because I was quickly taken across a courtyard into the library. There, behind a massive desk, the old man sat.

I walked over towards him. 'M'sieu D'Aronj, it is good to find you at home, sir. I was hoping to speak to you.'

'Were you?' His voice was cold.

'Yes . . . Your granddaughter and I, Seigneur . . .'

His voice was sarcastic as he interrupted. 'But, of course! Your charming campaign to win her hand!'

When I asked him what he meant, he continued: 'Did you imagine that I would not trouble to find out who you are? Algeria does not welcome such as you.'

'There's certainly a mistake somewhere . . .' I began.

'The only mistake is that I did not start earlier! Before you could make a fool of my granddaughter!'

I tried to brazen it out, but in my heart I knew that it was useless. 'I do not know what you are talking about,' I said, 'but whatever it is, Valerie knows it isn't true. Where is she?'

He didn't answer, so I shouted her name. 'Valerie!'

A door opened at the other end of the room and Ali, the giant Sudanese, stepped in, red fez, baggy pants and all. This time, however, something new had been added—a gay bandolier of cartridges and a rifle—a rifle whose black muzzle stared at me as the old man picked up the telephone on his desk.

After a few moments, he muttered angrily to himself, and replaced the receiver. Then he turned to me and said:

'The telephone service will no doubt improve itself later, and I will be able to arrange a police escort to take you back to town. In the meantime, Ali will convey you to a guest-room suitable for you.'

I started to talk fast. I explained that El Sikkeena thought he had discovered some treasure, that El Sikkeena was no friend of mine and that he might raid Barbarossa that very night.

The old man looked at me uncertainly. 'If it were true, which I doubt, why should you warn me? What do you expect to get out of this?' he asked.

'Your friendship,' I replied.

He repeated my words ironically.

'Plus, Monsieur,' I continued, 'a nominal percentage of the loot left by your illustrious ancestor.'

That terminated the interview. 'Nom d'un chien,' he exploded, 'take him out before I kill him.'

The 'suitable guest-room' in which Ali locked me featured primarily an iron door, naked stone walls and a single barred window. The hours passed, the shadows lengthened, and nothing happened except that I got thirsty. Towards evening I caught a sudden glimpse of Valerie crossing the courtyard with her

grandfather, and shouted to her from the window. She gave me a single look—and continued on. That look convinced me that, as far as she was concerned, I had as much appeal as a can of embalming fluid.

A crescent moon rose, stars burned bright and I got thirstier than ever. Was the old devil going to keep me there until I died of thirst, I wondered. Surely he'd got his blasted call through to Algiers by this time.

And then I knew. Of course! El Sikkeena and his raiders had cut the telephone lines in preparation for an attack.

No sooner had I reached that conclusion, than the attack began. From the firing I reckoned that there must have been at least a dozen of D'Aronj's retainers defending the fortress-like villa. And they seemed to be giving a good account of themselves; before long the bodies of El Sikkeena's bandits lay scattered in the courtyard and on the plain beyond.

The others had taken cover and were firing at the windows. Bullets came into my cell ricochetting from wall to wall. I couldn't help thinking that sooner or later, one would knock me into a side pocket.

But finally the firing slackened. Almost immediately my door opened. Valerie stood in the passage. 'You were right,' she said. 'You warned grandfather, but he did not believe you.'

I remained silent. She continued, 'Take this rifle, Harry. Help us defend the house.'

It was all one to me. If I was taken alive, I was finished anyway.

We picked our way through the darkened rooms and corridors, stepping over the bodies of the slain.

The big Sudanese lay half crouched beside an embrasure. He whirled as we entered.

'Better point that rifle the other way, lad,' I remarked. 'I'm on your side.'

A little farther on, Armand D'Aronj lay in the darkness. He turned on his side to look at us as we entered. Dim moonlight revealed his shirt-front dark with blood. He motioned me over beside him.

'I have taken a desperate choice,' he gasped with difficulty. 'But I have no other. If you love my granddaughter, you will aid to . . . to obtain her safety?'

'How?' I asked. It seemed a reasonable question in the circumstances.

He held out his hand and I could see that there was a parchment in it. 'The map of the treasure!' he exclaimed.

So it was true.

'Only the smaller part remains,' he went on. 'But, if you love Valerie, you can buy her life with it—and yours. You are clever, Lime! You can bargain with Sikkeena. Save Valerie from those swine!'

I was looking at the map. 'These symbols . . . I don't understand . . .'

He interrupted me: 'I will tell you their meaning. But first, swear on your hope of eternal salvation, that you will keep faith!'

I did as he asked.

'Listen, lean closer,' he went on, 'I will show you how to find the cave of the Corsairs . . .'

When D'Aronj had finished, I put the parchment in my pocket and tried to make the old man comfortable. But his body had gone limp and when I spoke

there was no answer. The master of Barbarossa was dead.

There was a sudden fusillade of shots. Then I heard Valerie's voice crying: 'Harry, come here, Ali is wounded.'

The big Sudanese was gasping with pain: 'M'sieu, load my gun! Quickly! They come!'

I stood up on the edge of the parapet. 'Mario! Mario! I shouted. 'Tell your boss to stop shooting. I've got everything under control!'

'Harry!' exclaimed Valerie.

But I had forgotten Ali, the big Sudanese, was dying as he brought his rifle-butt against the back of my skull. All the same, it was a blow that knocked me colder than a witch's kiss.

When I came to, the brightness of day hurt my eyes, and I closed them again, quick. The world rocked beneath me. It took me a moment or two to realise that I was tied hand and foot, draped across the back of a camel. The smell of salt aid was mixed with the smell of camel, and I saw the dark blue of the Mediterranean curving to the left.

The Bedouins halted and dismounted. My wrists and ankles were unbound, and I was led to the head of the column. Mario Marteau stood there, and beside him, Valerie D'Aronj.

I asked him why I had been tied up. After all, I had kept my part of the bargain.

'And I . . . I once thought you were a man . . . that I loved you.' Valerie spoke with loathing, but it was not the time to worry about her.

A few yards away some men were digging. Mario

noticed me watching them. He smiled, and remarked: 'A hole! For you, Harry!'

'But why? Where's El Sikkeena? Where is he? Bring me to him!'

'And you're supposed to be so clever,' chuckled Mario.

So he was El Sikkeena. I ought to have guessed that a long time ago.

My hand flew to my pocket. The map had gone. But I still had one trump card left.

Valerie was saying, 'I told you, I do not know about the code. And if I did, I'd die before I'd tell you!'

'I'll tell you for a price,' I offered.

'Price?'

'Set Mademoiselle D'Aronj and myself free in Algiers.'

'Is this one of your little tricks?' he asked.

I assured him that it was not. He thought for a few moments. Then he said: 'I will set you both free after we find the treasure, not before.' And I had to be content with that.

We followed the broken coastline and, later that day, as the sky grew grey and dust-devils danced, we reached the place. An old Bedouin remained with Valerie on the beach as I led them into a narrow break in the rocks—a break that widened into a great cavern. Their flashlight beams danced about and picked out a number of copper chests, green with age and corrosion! We'd found it—the Cave of the Corsairs!

'They are empty!' exclaimed Mario.

'D'Aronj must have taken most of it; but here's

one chest, Mario! Filled to the top with gold dust! Look!’

Over to the corner the rest of the gang were bending over some flasks. ‘Look, Mario, sacramental wine, in sealed flagons,’ I said. ‘Wine taken off the galley. I’ve kept my word, have I not? Don’t you think I should get a small share?’

His only reply was to call one of the bandits to him. ‘Hassan, take this dog out. Stand guard over him and the woman!’

We huddled on the beach in the lee of a sheltering rock, Valerie, our guards, and I. The mounting surf crashed on the narrow beach. Our guard stared enviously at the revelry in and about the cave.

I edged closer to the girl.

‘Keep away!’ she said sharply.

I kept my voice low. ‘Two of our guards are leaving—headed for the cave,’ I told her. ‘The others are staggering around, lying about in the sand. If they all drink enough . . .’

I broke off and looked at the entrance of the cave. Four men were bringing the chest of gold dust out.

‘They’re reeling,’ I muttered. ‘They don’t know where they’re going. They’re drunk. Hey, guard! Call Mario! Get them back!’

For the four men were walking straight into the sea!

‘Your thirty pieces of gold are gone, Judas!’ cried Valerie with delight.

Yes, they were gone, taken by the sea. The men were rolling over and over in the breakers. The chest was upside down. The yellow dust was all swallowed up.

Slow, heavy footsteps came up behind us. It was Mario.

'You . . . You, Lime . . .' he spat at me.

'Mario—Mario, no! What's the matter? Don't shoot!' I cried.

'I . . . I should have known it was a trick . . . I kill . . .'

But Mario Mareau collapsed, his pistol falling from his hand as he fell. I turned to Valerie.

'Look at them,' I said, 'all of them, the whole gang, lying around.'

She asked what I was going to do.

'Take you back to Algiers.'

'Then let us go! These swine won't sleep for ever.'

I laughed. 'Relax, sweetheart. They will.'

She looked at me in bewilderment.

'Your grandfather put that wine there himself,' I explained. 'He told me so before he died.'

'What do you mean?'

'It was for the refreshment of all who might come upon the treasure in his absence. A fine old vintage . . . loaded with poison!'



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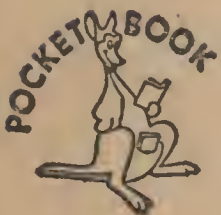
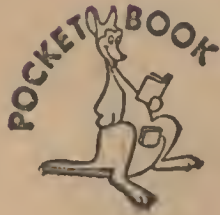
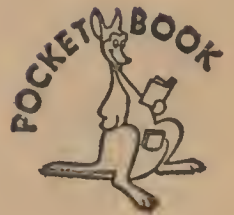
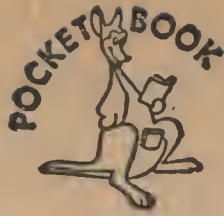
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